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THE

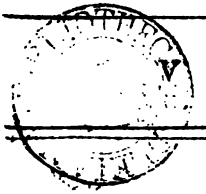
MASQUERADE.

VOL. II.

THE MASQUERADE;

OR, THE HISTORY OF LORD AVON AND MISS TAMEWORTH.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.



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THE

MASQUERADE.

LETTER XXIX.

Mr. MOUNTNEY to Colonel ACKWORTH.

YOU deſire ſo earneſtly to hear how Avon and his Eudocia go on, that I proceed to inform you—My lord is perfectly recovered from his illneſs: but as to his jealouſy, it will not, I am inclined to imagine, be totally eradicated; becauſe his love is, I think, increaſed—The concern which ſhe diſcovered at his illneſs, and her readineſs to pardon him,

at a time when he knew he was the aggreſſor, have operated ſo powerfully on him, that he is half wild with rapture.

The picture which occaſioned all this confuſion was, it ſeems, drawn of the ſize of that which Sedley gave to Olivia, and ſet in the ſame manner, by order of lady Avon; who, having long had a fancy to have my lord's portrait, in the dreſs in which ſhe firſt ſaw him, and thinking Sedley's picture a ſtriking likeneſs, went privately with Olivia to the painter, and deſired him to copy my lord's face from her bracelet; (as he had refuſed to gratify her requeſt, becauſe he deemed it an idle one) and to dreſs him in the manner ſhe deſcribed.—It was juſt come home that evening when he caught her admiring it—He took it for Sedley's; and from that miſtake aroſe the quarrel between them, which was attended with ſuch unhappy conſequences.

Olivia, who before always took my lord's part, has owned to me that ſhe thought

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Olivia bluſhed and broke from me, but ſaid nothing.

Eudocia cried, "See there, my lord, the force of example! You have, by your behaviour, authorized your friend to be impertinent, and put us both out of countenance."

"Nay now, my lord," ſaid I, "I am quite of your ſide of the queſtion; e'en ſay what you pleaſe to her, and do what you pleaſe with her."

This revived his good-humour: he ſeized Eudocia, while I ran after Olivia, and had but juſt caught her, when the lively lady Avon flew haſtily from the arms of her huſband to ſave her friend from mine. A romping-bout with two ſuch fine creatures, few men could have reſiſted; and I ſwear there was ſo much brightneſs mixed with ſenſibility in Eudocia's eyes, when ſhe laid hold of my ſhoulder, in order to give Olivia time to eſcape, that I had need of all my friend-

ſhip

ſhip for her huſband, added to his preſence, to check the ſtrong deſire I felt to gratify my wiſhes upon her exquiſitely-inviting lips. Married men are highly indiſcreet in toying with their wives before us ſingle fellows—A great deal of ſelf-denial, I aſſure you, is neceſſary upon ſuch occaſions.

You have ſtill evaded an anſwer to my queſtion, with regard to Sedley's deſigns upon Olivia: but I ſhall ſoon be in town; I ſhall then expect to hear ſomething about them.

I forgot to tell you that in a ſhort time after our return from the garden, Miſs Heber came to the Wood, accompanied by a moſt agreeable young fellow, tall, genteel, and more graceful in his appearance than people bred up altogether in the country uſually are.

A lively glow overſpread his face on lady Avon's approach, who received him with all the familiarity of a ſiſter, calling

him dear Edmund, and telling him ſhe was extremely glad to ſee him.

A kind of forced ſmile juſt gleamed on his face, on which a pleaſing melancholy appeared when he entered the room. He addreſſed a ſhort but polite compliment to her on her marriage, endeavouring to ſtifle a ſigh which heaved his boſom at the concluſion of it. He ſoon afterwards took his leave.

Lord Avon eagerly aſked who he was?

"He is the ſon of Mr. Haſtings," replied my lady, "a gentleman who was once a neighbour to my grandfather—Edmund having been brought up with us from our infancy, has always been looked on by us as our brother."

I caſt my eye over all the three ladies during that ſpeech; and in the features of the perſon who uttered it, ſaw nothing but the ſweetneſs of her diſpoſition and the openneſs of her heart, which were, indeed, ſtrongly expreſſed in them.

Olivia

Olivia alſo looked unmoved; but Alicia haſtily threw down her eyes, and coloured.

I was, afterwards, informed, that this young Haſtings had, from a boy, diſtinguiſhed Eudocia from her companions, by a partial fondneſs, but had never made any declaration of love to her; that he had been deeply dejected ever ſince her marriage, and that he was abſent from home when he firſt came down; but that, upon his return, as he deſired to ſee the happy man to whom ſhe was married, Miſs Heber had brought him to pay his compliments.

I rallied lady Avon during the remainder of the evening, upon her conqueſt over this amiable ruſtic; and my lord joined with me, who would have been as well pleaſed, I believe, if Edmund had not made his appearance among us: tho' I dare ſwear that Eudocia feels no particular prejudices in his favour.—

I ſeized an opportunity when ſhe left the room, to warn my lord againſt giving way, on every trifling occurrence, to ſuſpicions which ſhe did not deſerve; adding, that the encouragement of them might, in time, occaſion a breach between them; and that he muſt make allowances for the extreme vivacity of her temper; and by placing, or ſeeming to place, an entire confidence in her, win her heart to himſelf.—

"How!" cried he, ſtarting, "do you really think that I am not in poſſeſſion of her heart? that ſhe does not love me?"

"I have no doubt concerning her love for you," ſaid I; "but in order to prevent a diminution of it, let me recommend to your ſerious attention, thoſe lines of the poet.

Be to her faults a little blind,
Be to her virtues very kind;
Let all her ways be unconfin'd,
And clap your padlock on her mind.

He

He ſhook his head at me—He has not reſolution enough, I fear, to follow my advice.

Our journey is put off for a few days, or I ſhould not have written ſo long an epiſtle.

LETTER XXX.

Sir CHARLES SEDLEY to Col. ACKWORTH.

THEY are all here again—But the devil of it is, my lord and lady ſeem to be reconciled again, and in ſuch a manner as to make me deſpair of a ſecond rupture. She is all lovelineſs and condeſcenſion: he all tranſport and tenderneſs.

My pretty little Olivia appears to have changed both her humour and complexion ſince ſhe left London—She is grown much paler, and infinitely more ſhy of me. The beauteous lady Avon, on the contrary, is returned with more bloom in her cheeks and more luſtre in her eyes, and treats me with her uſual politeneſs and freedom.—Yet I think I can obſerve that Avon is more about her than ever—He does not, indeed, ſeem

to

to lay any reſtraint on her inclination, but is ſo eternally at her elbow, that a man muſt be more dextrous than the devil, to find an opportunity of ſaying or doing any thing to the purpoſe. I muſt, therefore, *fineſſe* a little.

Olivia, I find, is ſtill partial to me; tho' confoundedly unwilling to let her partiality in my favour appear—She has, I ſuppoſe, been telling tales, and ſome old maiden aunt in the country has bid her beware—The pretty, tender creature, however, is not abſolutely averſe to me—She fetched a deep ſigh, a ſigh from the bottom of her heart, when I preſſed her hand laſt night. I ſhall, therefore, ſtick cloſe to her, for the preſent at leaſt; and ſo you may tell Mountney that I am abſolutely fixed upon Olivia, and deſire him to keep at a proper diſtance. I am confoundedly diſappointed tho' to find myſelf obliged to begin where I deſigned to end. Every woman but lady Avon, after having flown from her huſband in reſent-

reſentment, would have received a thouſand amorous overtures by this time from all the men of gallantry in town:—But there is I know not what—there is ſuch a graceful dignity in her carriage, ſuch a forbidding reſerve in her manner, and yet at the ſame time ſuch an inviting ſoftneſs in her eyes, that tho' every man is dying for her, no man dares to attack her.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

Miſs OLIVIA HEBER to Miſs HEBER.

I HAVE done every thing in my power, my dear ſiſter, to follow your advice; which is, I well know, ſincerely given for the promotion of my happineſs—But oh! my Alicia, you do not know Sir Charles.

When we firſt met, after our return to London, I put on all the reſerve which I had promiſed to aſſume: but how ſoon, how very ſoon did he find that I was acting a part in oppoſition to nature!—He has been continually by my ſide ever ſince I came to town, and has ſeized every opportunity to give me the ſtrongeſt proofs of his attention: I with difficulty, however, ſhunned him till laſt night—but then my endeavours proved unſucceſsful.

Laſt

Laſt night Eudocia, not being quite well, tho' really not indiſpoſed enough to confine herſelf to her apartment, was intreated by my lord, (who is fearful leſt the wind ſhould blow upon her), ſo earneſtly to ſtay alone in her dreſſing-room, that ſhe complied with his requeſt.

Happening to go into the parlour for ſomething, I ſaw Sir Charles, who proteſted that I ſhould not leave him, till I had informed him what he had done to diſpleaſe me. I made twenty idle excuſes to get from him; but at the ſame time looked ſo ſilly, and ſo diſconcerted, that I betrayed myſelf; and upon his urging me to let him know only what ſhare he poſſeſſed of my regard, felt ſuch a ſinking at my heart that I could not ſpeak: and my ſighs, I am afraid I may add my tears, diſcovered what I wiſhed to conceal.—Yet he is not ſufficiently ſatisfied with me, to apply to my father—The moment he is ſure of my heart, he ſays, the moment will he ſollicit his approbation—How

happy

happy ſhall I be, if ever that time arrives!

I have acquainted lady Avon with his behaviour — She wiſhes I may find Sir Charles the man I wiſh him to be, but adviſes me not to put much confidence in him till I ſee farther.

Mr. Mountney looks upon me, methinks, with an eye of pity, while all my glances are confined to him alone who has poſſeſſion of my heart.—

Do not chide me, Alicia—I pity, I feel for you—Yet Edmund is not half ſo lovely as Sir Charles.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

Sir CHARLES SEDLEY to Col. ACKWORTH.

I HAVE, once more, hopes—of ſome of the family at leaſt—I have watched Olivia as cloſely as a rattle-ſnake does a lizzard, longing to ſee her drop into my mouth; but ſhe was wondrous cold till t'other evening—I luckily found her alone, and ſwore not to part with her till ſhe had told me the true cauſe of her reſerve. It was ſome time before I could make my coy gentlewoman diſcover what paſſed in that little ſhy heart of her's; tho' I plainly ſaw that ſhe wiſhed to make me acquainted with it. In ſhort I ſo plied her with queſtions, all of the tender kind, and backed them with ſo many ſoft inſinuating careſſes, that the poor girl became half intoxicated, and could only reply with ſighs and tears—

Faith

Faith I was almoſt tempted to avail myſelf of the critical moment; but tho' a pretty knowing one in matters of this kind, I was afraid to truſt to appearances—I did not, to tell you the truth, think myſelf quite ſure of her: beſides, I could not be certain that ſomebody might not come.—

I was right—A rap at the door rouzed her from my boſom, on which ſhe had ſunk in a fit of tenderneſs; and I could not prevail on her—tho' nobody was let in—to ſtay any longer with me, unleſs I would that moment conſent to write to old Heber, and make a ſolemn offer of myſelf—Catch me at that if you can, colonel—I have told you, before, my ſentiments of the extreme indelicacy of ſuch proceedings; and do not deſpair, now, of carrying my deſigns into execution without them. But I muſt keep cloſe to her—By doing ſo I ſhall, in the long run, find opportunities with lady Avon, as ſhe and her friend are almoſt inſeparable—Harkee,

—George,

—George, talk to me no more about honour—Nonſenſe—If a woman will not take care of her own honour, ſhe certainly ſets no value on it; and I may as well take advantage of her careleſſneſs as another.—You may preach till doomſday; but I ſay, and inſiſt upon it, that the woman, on ſuch an occaſion, is the principal delinquent—We lie, we flatter, and we ſwear moſt profuſely, to be ſure; but thoſe who know the world, know that our words are meer counters—She, therefore, who is weak enough to give credit to them, deſerves to be bubbled.—However, if they knew how much the moſt abandoned among us adore virtue when we find it, many of them would hold out much longer than they do.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

Lord Avon to Mr. Mountney.

LAST night my Eudocia appeared, for the firſt time, at Ranelagh; and to my ſorrow, ſhe likes it ſo well, that I believe ſhe will never be abſent when the doors are open. With pain did I ſee the men run over her beauties with greedy eyes; with pain did I obſerve her flutterings whenever a gay figure approached her. I endeavoured, ſeveral times, to catch a moment, to aſk her opinion concerning a place which ſhe had never ſeen before—But I could not, poſſibly, get near enough to her to ſatisfy my curioſity, ſo numerous were her admirers crowding about her: and I dare ſay ſhe thought no more of me while ſo ſurrounded, than if ſhe had never known me.

Diſguſted

Diſguſted at ſuch intolerable giddineſs, I went and ſat down on a ſeat, from which I could ſee her and her enamoured train paſs and repaſs in review before me.

I was ſick to death at the quantity of nonſenſe which I heard; yet I muſt own that, excluſive of her ſmiles, of which ſhe was very liberal, I ſaw nothing really cenſurable in her behaviour.

Sedley and lord Cheſter were the moſt buſy about her; but I thought ſhe endeavoured to keep them both, particularly the former, at a decent diſtance.

Sedley is too free: I wiſh I could handſomely get rid of his acquaintance.

She dropped her fan: Sedley took it up, and begged her permiſſion to make uſe of it for a few minutes, as the heat of the room was exceſſive.

She replied, with a reſerved air, that ſhe wanted it herſelf.

He

He then preſented it to her, affectedly repeating,

Favours to none, to all ſhe ſmiles extends;
Oft ſhe rejects, but never once offends.

Lord Cheſter immediately added,

Bright as the ſun her eyes the gazers ſtrike,
But like the ſun reflect on all alike.

Lady Tameworth, who was of the party, cried, "Vaſtly pretty, indeed, my lord."

Eudocia's eyes, conſcious of their powers of pleaſing, rolled in an ecſtaſy of delight, and ſeemed to acquire additional ſpirit, from the admiring multitude.—A fine amuſement for ſo doating a huſband as myſelf: it might have done well enough for one of your modern animals, your meerly nominal huſbands; but by a man of feeling and ſenſibility, who took a partner for life, in order to have her to himſelf,

ſelf, it was not, you may be ſure, to be endured. And yet now, to follow your advice, I muſt, I ſuppoſe, let her alone, ſuffer her to do juſt as ſhe thinks proper, and wait ſubmiſſively till ſhe has laviſhed all her ſpirits upon a crowd of fluttering coxcombs; and then take her, ſurfeited with pleaſure, and half dead with fatigue, to my arms. Oh! woman! woman!—I wonder why I married;—and yet, when I conſider how many delicious moments I have paſſed with her, moments which I ſhould not have enjoyed with any other of her ſex, I would endure all this and more to call her mine: but while ſhe can reliſh life thus without me, my felicity cannot be compleat. I would have her the happieſt of her ſex, but then I would be the perſon alone to make her ſo.—If I am not *that* perſon, I muſt be wretched beyond expreſſion.

I have juſt ſtarted a ſcheme which may, poſſibly, be of ſervice to me. I will pretend indifference; nay more, I will affect

to

to be fond of another woman.—Such an alteration in my behaviour will ſurely move her, if ſhe has any love remaining for me: it will force her to diſcover it. How tranſported ſhall I be to ſee her ſighing and dying for me, as I have been, and am now, at this inſtant, for her.—There's rapture in the thought!—I'll proceed to action immediately. The difficulty will be to find a proper woman with whom I may be in no danger of going too far; I mean upon the lady's account, for I can never *love* any woman after Eudocia.

On recollection, there is a pretty, young, lively widow, a relation of lady Tameworth's, who was at our marriage. She has kept up an acquaintance with lady Avon ever ſince, and has been always mighty civil to me. She was of our party laſt night—Chance made it neceſſary for me, out of politeneſs, to hand her to her coach. She is not handſome enough to be mentioned with Eudocia; yet ſhe is

ſufficiently handſome to make any man like her. I will tell my wife that I am violently charmed with Mrs. Minchin upon a nearer acquaintance, and ſee what effect that intelligence has on her.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

Mr. MOUNTNEY to Lord AVON.

YOU never was more wrong in your life. This ſcheme of your's is the worſt you could have thought upon—It will not, I dare ſay, have the intended effect on lady Avon; and it may draw you into many difficulties.

Upon my ſoul, Avon, you make yourſelf too uneaſy about meer trifles.—My lady may certainly amuſe herſelf very innocently in public, with a party of her and your relations and friends, without giving you any room to be jealous. You will really, by purſuing this plan, either drive her to extremities, or get an entanglement upon your hands; never conſidering how much you may injure the character of the lady whom you pretend to admire.—Were you a ſingle fellow like myſelf, you might flirt with any body, now and then, with

ſafety: but the public attentions of a married man—and they *muſt* be public to anſwer your purpoſe—will certainly injure the reputation of the woman who is diſtinguiſhed by them. Beſides, ſuppoſing this objection to your conduct could be obviated, can you, finding jealouſy ſo troubleſome a paſſion, wiſh to make your Eudocia ſenſible of its pangs? Reflect a little, my friend, before you enter upon the execution of ſo wild a ſcheme. That lady Avon may be rather more fond of the pleaſures of the world, juſt at this time, than you wiſh her to be, I will allow; but, believe me, you will ſooner cure her by ſatiating her with them, than by affronting her with gallantry to another woman. You confeſs that you do not yet ſee any thing actually blameable in your wife's carriage: but how can you be ſure that your behaviour will not ſtir up the ſpirit of retaliation in her?—Take care, my lord; you really don't think enough of what you are about.

LETTER

LETTER XXXV.

Lord AVON to Mr. MOUNTNEY.

THE die was caſt before I received your anſwer—your precautions were well meant, but they came too late—as to my ſcheme's not having the intended effect on my wife, I am of your mind, though it cuts me to the ſoul to think that ſhe does not love me well enough to trouble herſelf about me.—With regard to myſelf, I ſhall be in no danger of falling in love a ſecond time: with regard to the lady, as ſhe is a widow of about eight and twenty, with a good jointure, and a handſome fortune beſides, has been truſted to her own diſcretion theſe four years, and is an intimate of my wife's, there is no fear of her character's ſuffering from my being very civil to her only in lady Avon's ſight. She has, to

encourage me, rather made me ſome advances—Oh! that I could ſee my Eudodocia as anxious about me as I have been about her!—I will try, however—the temptation is too ſtrong to be reſiſted.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

Sir CHARLES SEDLEY to Col. ACKWOTH.

BETTER and better: things go on rarely, at preſent.—Avon, would you believe it, is become, on a ſudden, mighty ſweet upon Mrs. Minchin—whether he really is in love with her, or only pretends to be ſo, I will not attempt to ſay; but I ſee plainly that he may be drawn into a ſituation he is not aware of.

This widow muſt not preſume to vie with lady Avon in point of beauty; but ſhe is agreeable in the ſtrongeſt ſenſe of the word.—Have you never met with a woman who, after having made no impreſſion on you at firſt, became, on a nearer acquaintance, almoſt imperceptibly, attractive to a great degree; the more attractive for having been gradually ſo?——I take Mrs. Minchin to be exactly ſuch a kind of wo-

man.—She is lively, but her livelineſs is not at all like lady Avon's—whoſe vivacity ariſes from her innocence and good humour; and her heart laughs in her features. On the contrary, Mrs. Minchin's mirth is forced; ſhe ſtrives to be ſprightly in order to pleaſe; and, poſſibly, conceals a vaſt ſtock of tenderneſs, which would not ſit ſo well in public, upon a young widow whoſe huſband has been dead but a few years; a man who, it is thought, neither improved his health nor fortune, by marrying. She is alſo, I know, a very great admirer of lord Avon, and was heard to ſay to a female friend, when he married—which faithful friend repeated it to another faithful friend as an immenſe ſecret—"Then the handſomeſt and moſt deſireable man in the world is loſt."—There now!—don't you think that he will draw himſelf into a fine dilemma? If any thing can ſhake lady Avon's virtue, this procedure certainly muſt; if it does not ſtagger it, I'll give her up.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVII.

Lady AVON to Miſs HEBER.

I AM actually aſhamed of having been ſo long without writing to you, my dear Alicia; but ſince the opening of Ranelagh, my houſe have been more engaged than ever. How ſhall I give you an idea of this moſt elegant—I may add ſuperb—and pleaſureable place? I am afraid I ſhall not do juſtice to it with my deſcriptive pen. In ſhort, next to the opera houſe on a maſquerade night, it is the delightfulleſt place I ever ſaw in my life, and admirably calculated for people of my turn, who love to ſee and be ſeen, and to laugh and to chat, and ſo forth. A maſquerade, indeed, is a more ſpirited entertainment, becauſe it admits of a more free circulation of wit and humour; but then thoſe who perſonate a character for the evening, ought to keep it

up: now to keep up a character with propriety on ſuch an occaſion, is to act with conſiderable reſtraint; and if, from want of taſte, judgment, or vivacity, you enter not thoroughly into your part, and move and ſpeak agreeably to the dreſs aſſumed, you appear in a ridiculous light for having miſtaken either your abilities or your genius: whereas at Ranelagh, whether you are gay or ſerious, ſprightly or dull, you will always find ſomebody to afford you amuſement; you have no kind of trouble, but drop in juſt at what hour you pleaſe; you meet all your acquaintance, and ſee, and hear, and are diverted with every thing which comes in your way. For my part, I go every night, and with the greater pleaſure, as my lord makes no oppoſition to my appearance there—He grumbled, indeed, a little, at firſt; but now he ſeems to receive as much ſatisfaction from a Ranelagh-evening as I do, or amuſes himſelf ſomewhere elſe.

Poor

Poor Olivia is almoſt tired already of this charming ſpot, and therefore I frequently make a party with Mrs. Minchin, a prodigious agreeable woman, diſtantly related to lady Tameworth. She happens to be a favourite of my lord's, ſo he cannot but approve of my being in her company. For theſe two nights he has pleaded an engagement in another place; on thoſe nights I faſtened on lady Tameworth, not chuſing, when my lord is not with me, to go with people, againſt whom he may, I think, have any objections.

We are, at preſent, in a leſs ſquabbling ſtate, than we have been ſince we were married—My lord goes one way, and I another.—This way of life is certainly very polite; but this ſort of politeneſs is not entirely to my taſte: for tho' I love entertaining company, and agreeable converſation, I never enjoy ſuch company and converſation thoroughly, unleſs my lord partakes of the pleaſure which I receive from them.—Now, to be ſure, I cannot expect

him to feel always as I do, becauſe our diſpoſitions are different: tho' a young man, he is ſome years older than *I* am, and naturally of a more ſerious caſt—Some allowance too muſt be made, ſuppoſing myſelf to be thought of too lively a turn, for my education as well as my age: my lord had been brought up in the *world*, and was grown weary of it juſt when I began to be ſtruck with its gaieties: the world, I confeſs, has many charms for *me*, but not enough to make me forget what I owe to my lord.

You won't laugh at me, I know, Alicia,—tho' Mrs. Minchin laughed—when I tell you, that I was unhappy at his ſupping out a few evenings ago, and not coming home till paſt two the next morning.—I could by no means compoſe myſelf to ſleep: and yet I took no notice of his coming home ſo late to me: while he permits me to pleaſe myſelf in my own way, he ſhould, undoubtedly, be ſuffered to enjoy himſelf in *his* uncenſured.—But he came home ſtrangely diſordered—at leaſt,

I fancied ſo,—poſſibly, however, I might be miſtaken, for I was not quite well.—

He, at firſt, came and looked on me; but ſeemed fearful of waking me: to ſay truth, I was half aſleep; but hearing him fetch a deep ſigh, I lifted up my eyes, and aſked him if he was not well.

He only anſwered by making a thouſand excuſes for having diſturbed me—begging me to go to ſleep, if I poſſibly could, and not to think of him who was not worthy of my attention.

I was extremely at a loſs to know what he meant, and finding that he could not very well explain himſelf, concluded he was fatigued alſo, and wiſhed him a good night.

We are very good friends; but yet, he is apparently altered. He ſeems to be frequently buried in thought. He is leſs at home: kind and obliging, indeed, when he is with me, but no longer troubles himſelf about my engagements nor my conduct: I go where I will, I do what I will, with-

without producing any anxious enquiries? —I hope I ſhall be able, however, to give a good account of my behaviour: I love chearfulneſs, 'tis true, no body more; but if I am at all acquainted with my own heart, the ſtrongeſt powers on earth cannot make me prefer any man to my lord.

I greatly diſapprove of Sir Charles's carriage to Olivia and to myſelf — I am ſure he deceives my dear friend: but he ſhall never deceive me. Were he ever ſo agreeable, I ſhould deſpiſe him for ſuppoſing me capable of falling into the ſnares which he is laying for me: yet I will not openly quarrel with him till Olivia ſees as thoroughly into his real character as I do. His trifling with her is too particular to be overlooked, and it is with the ſincereſt concern I perceive it begins to injure her health. He is artful enough to make her believe that he is fond of *her*, and of *her* alone: now it is pretty plain to me, that he is fond of no human creature except himſelf. Time, I hope, will convince our

dear

dear Olivia, that he is not deſerving of her eſteem.—There is no fear of his making her miſerable by *marriage*, and I dare believe that her virtuous principles will prevent her from being rendered miſerable by him in any other way.—Yet ſhe pines, I am afraid, for this undeſerving man.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

Lord Avon to Mr. Mountney.

YOU are right, my dear friend. You kindly pointed out to me the precipice to which I was hurrying, but I had not power to ſhun it—I have not only ruined my own peace, but the peace of an amiable woman who loves me.—To fill up the meaſure of my folly, I have rendered myſelf totally unworthy of my wife, my Eudocia, my angel. How ſhall I look up to her again! where is that openneſs of heart, that honeſt tenderneſs, that ſincerity of paſſion, of which I ſo lately boaſted?—What fools, I may add what villains, does ſuſpicion make of us? Had I not ſuſpected a dear creature who, I now firmly believe, never erred, I had been but too happy. How readily does one deviation from reaſon make way for another! From being

being cauſeleſly jealous of my wife, I became deſirous of rendering her, if poſſible, jealous of *me*: By being *ſo* deſirous, I have undone myſelf.

I fixed upon Mrs. Minchin as a woman proper for my purpoſe for two reaſons:—I ſaw her often with my wife, and ſhe had not a little encouraged me to believe that ſhe liked me. I made the firſt overtures by paying her numberleſs aſſiduities, when in company with Eudocia, whom I, at the ſame time, neglected; and perceiving that Eudocia took no notice of them, I doubled them, ſtill in hopes to rouze her, but in vain:—too attentive to her own amuſements, or confiding too much in my proteſtations, to imagine me capable of preferring any other woman to herſelf, ſhe either quite overlooked my behaviour, or concluded it to ariſe from nothing but a deſire to diſtinguiſh her particular favourite, as Mrs. Minchin appeared to be, next to Olivia. But tho' my Eudocia diſcovered nothing new or uncommon in my carriage to

Mrs.

Mrs. Minchin, *ſhe* diſcerned a ſingularity in it, and diſcerned it with a pleaſure too great to be concealed. In ſhort, ſhe gave me all the encouragement that the warmeſt lover could expect; and, as I could not check her in public without ſpoiling my plan, I went from one ſtep to another, till ſhe, by almoſt imperceptible degrees, made me, by her flattery, feel ſomething like a pleaſure in being near her.—No ſooner did ſhe perceive that ſhe had made a conſiderable impreſſion upon me, than ſhe became ſtill more and more inſinuating and ſeducing; attaching herſelf in ſo particular a manner to me, that I grew inſenſibly off my guard, and complied with an invitation to ſup with her alone at her own houſe.—I was there, I ſuppoſe, unneceſſarily ſoft and civil; for ſhe made a full declaration of her ſentiments, which were of the tendereſt nature, proteſting that ſhe had long entertained them for me, and for no living creature but me: adding, however, at the ſame time, with a deep ſigh which agitated

a very

a very fine boſom, not entirely covered, while her eyes, ſtrongly expreſſive of the tender paſſion, were ſtill more eloquent than her words, that ſince fate had otherwiſe diſpoſed of me, ſhe could now hope for nothing but my friendſhip, which I could not, ſhe thought, without being diveſted of humanity, refuſe her.

I was, you may imagine, a little ſurprized that matters had gone ſo far—Had I riſen and left her then, all would have been right, at leaſt on *my* ſide;—and I, at firſt, certainly intended to leave her; but, whether ſhe gueſſed my purpoſe or not, I cannot tell; in order to induce me to ſtay with the leſs reluctance, ſhe obliged me to give her the relation of my amour with my wife, which ſhe had long wiſhed to hear, ſhe ſaid, from my own mouth.

I complied with pleaſure, as I always love to dwell on the delightful ſubject.—But—will you not be aſtoniſhed to hear, that while I was breathing the warmeſt expreſſions in praiſe of my charming Eudocia,

cia, I was, at that very inſtant, weakening my attachment to her?—I am aſhamed to ſay I *was*.—The converſation, occaſioned by my narrative, naturally turned upon love, and my agreeable widow knew perfectly well how to improve that animating ſubject to her own advantage.—Shall I proceed?—My paſſions were vanquiſhed, tho' my heart remained untouched, and ſhe made me, apparently, every thing ſhe wiſhed me to be.

As ſoon, however, as the delirium of the moment was over, reflection returned with double force—my eyes were opened, and I ſaw my folly and my guilt in the ſtrongeſt light.

My fair companion ſeemed to be utterly unable to ſupport herſelf under the conſciouſneſs of her criminal conduct: with frequent ſighs and floods of tears ſhe lamented her own imbecility, and intreated me, on her knees, not to expoſe her.—"Do not publiſh my infamy, ſaid ſhe, ſobbing as if her heart would break, nor increaſe the ſe-

vere

vere torments which I endure, by forſaking me—Do not, oh! do not abandon me—Conſider, my lord, that I have given up honour, every thing on which a woman ought to ſet the higheſt value, to gratify my paſſion for him who is dearer to me than life itſelf.—Do not then forget what I have ſacrificed for you—do not neglect me now, in this degrading, but I hope, pitiable ſituation—I can bear any thing but your indifference."

Only think, Mountney, what a heart, full of ſenſibility as mine is, muſt have felt when I ſaw ſo amiable a woman at my feet bathed in tears, and ſinking under affliction exquiſitely oppreſſive, occaſioned by the indulgence of a paſſion for me, which tho' criminal was, nevertheleſs, tender and affecting beyond all conception —— Had I known Mrs. Minchin before Eudocia, nothing could have entirely won me from her —as no woman ever was ſo enchantingly pleaſing in thoſe moments when ſhe threw off all reſerve, and gave a looſe to her na-

tural ſenſations: but the hopes of finding Eudocia, one day, as fond of me, the conſciouſneſs of having wronged *her* who never had injured me, tho' I was cruel enough to ſuſpect her fidelity, and the neceſſity I am now under of breaking off all commerce with Mrs. Minchin, who doats on *me* with the ſame ardor as I do on my wife, almoſt tear my heart in pieces, and drive me to madneſs.

Had I taken *your* advice, Mountney, I had done well; but who can always liſten to the dictates of reaſon?

I ſtayed with this intoxicating creature till paſt two in the morning — Then, I ſtarted from my chair, and hurried home, after having been very tenderly and repeatedly reproached for being in ſuch haſte, and as many times moſt ardently intreated to return the next evening. — I promiſed every thing to get away from her.

When I came home, I found my dear, innocent angel aſleep. I ſoftly opened the curtain to ſteal a look at a face ſo infinitely

ſu-

ſuperior to that which I had quitted—She waked; and ſeeing my inquietude, for my mind was tortured beyond expreſſion, kindly aſked me if I was not well.

I did not deſerve ſo much regard, Mountney; her affectionate queſtion, therefore, cut me to the ſoul, and conſiderably increaſed the anguiſh I endured from the ſharp ſtings of recollection.

Begging her to go to reſt, I could not help adding, with a ſigh, that I was not worthy of her attention or eſteem.

She opened her dear eyes wide, with aſtoniſhment; but there could be no explanation. — There — there's the miſchief.— Tho', happily, ſhe did not ſeem to wiſh for any. I am, however, unſpeakably miſerable.—One woman is already ruined by me beyond all reparation; and when my Eudocia comes to the knowledge of my perfidy, may ſhe not alſo hate and deſpiſe m for it, and extinguiſh all my hopes of pardon and returning love. — My ſoul ſhrinks at the diſcouraging apprehenſion.

Be-

Beſides, if I ſhould catch her tripping now,—I madden at the idea—with what juſtice, with what propriety, can I upbraid her with the commiſſion of a crime, of which I have, myſelf, been guilty? How can I, after having violated my conjugal vows, expect my wife to preſerve her fidelity unſhaken.

This diſhonourable proceeding of mine, however, has not made me leſs jealous; it has only rendered me aſhamed of my ſuſpicions, and did I imagine that they were not altogether groundleſs, I ſhould, I believe, run diſtracted.

I had no reſt all night. At breakfaſt I was loſt in thought; nor were the lively, innocent ſmiles of my angel capable of diverting me. My reflections were too melancholy to be removed by her kind and chearful endeavours.

At laſt, as if willing to make me uncommonly happy, (Olivia being gone out of the room for ſomething) ſhe threw her lovely arm round my neck, and diſcovered ſo much

much anxiety about me, that I ſoon became quite enraptured; and forgetting every thing but the preſent happy moment, let my head fall on her charming boſom, while I liſtened with ecſtacy to a thouſand queſtions concerning my health, without hearing a ſingle interrogation relating to my uncommon behaviour.

While I was giving up my whole ſoul to joys unfelt before, the door opened, and —Mrs. Minchin entered.

You may eaſily conceive how Mrs. Minchin and I looked upon the occaſion; and will, I dare ſay, readily believe me, when I tell you, that Eudocia was the only unembarraſſed perſon in the room. The dear, innocent creature, conſcious of no ill, appeared a thouſand times more beautiful, from the modeſt glow which overſpread her face, on being thus ſurprized.—Her rival, on the contrary, coloured up to the eyes from guilt, love, jealouſy, and rage, which ſtrongly agitated her boſom, while ſhe ſwelled to vent

what ſhe was obliged totally to ſuppreſs.—Her feelings were, in conſequence of ſuch a ſuppreſſion, doubly painful.—A frown, a ſevere frown, however, which ſhe darted at me, on her entrance, gave ſome little eaſe to her full heart: but ſhe was immediately forced to convert it into a ſmile when ſhe accoſted my wife.

To what meanneſſes, to what contemptible ſubterfuges, do our vices reduce us!

I looked, I am ſure, like a villain and a fool, and would have given a large ſum to have been a hundred miles from the place I was in. I ſcarce knew how to ſpeak to this very woman in the morning, with whom I had committed a thouſand amorous follies the night before—I abſolutely felt bluſhes in my cheeks, and turned away my head, to conceal ſenſations which I could no way reſtrain.

Mrs. Minchin, who ſeems very well verſed in the art of diſſimulation, ſoon recovered herſelf, and fell into the common chat of the morning with my wife.

I took

I took an opportunity, while ſhe was ſo engaged, to ſlip out of the room, ſneaking off from two charming women, whom I had injured, and with the ſight of whom, therefore, my eyes were pained.

I revived as ſoon as I got out of my own houſe.—How little, how very little have I made myſelf!—

I returned time enough to dreſs before dinner. Bingley then put the following letter into my hand, which had been, he ſaid, juſt brought by a chairman.

To the Right Honourable Lord Viſcount Avon.

AFTER what paſſed laſt night, had I not reaſon to expect a very different reception in the morning, when my fond impatience to ſee you again brought me to your houſe. — Shocked to the ſoul at catching you doating on my too lovely rival, I yet felt myſelf inclined to excuſe you, if you had but diſcovered the ſlighteſt conſidera-

tion for me, whoſe paſſion for you has been of a much longer date than her's, and a thouſand times more diſintereſted, as I have ſacrificed every thing which ought to have been moſt dear to me, to indulge *you* to the very height of your wiſhes; at the ſame time, I will honeſtly confeſs, that I gratified my own.—But ſhould my doating on you to this monſtrous extreme, render you leſs grateful, leſs tender, to one, whoſe heart beats for you alone, and who can enjoy no felicity except ſhe poſſeſſes a ſhare of *your*'s?—I can ſtill pardon your cruel neglect this morning, if you will not fail to let me ſee you to-night—If you diſappoint me, my lord, I ſwear by all that's ſolemn, I will diſcover your perfidy to lady Avon to-morrow.—I cannot conclude thus harſhly—Muſt I be obliged to threaten the man whom I love?—No—let me but ſee you, and all ſhall be forgotten and forgiven.

Your's for ever,

HARRIOT.

I can't

I can't deſcribe the agitation into which I was thrown by reading this letter. I knew not how to act—One minute, I determined to ſend her word, that I never would ſee her any more; — but the dread of her making a thorough breach between me and my adored Eudocia, kept me under ſuch reſtraint, that I could not bring myſelf to diſpatch ſuch a meſſage to her. —I am come to that paſs now, that I dare not even be honeſt. How frequently fatal are the firſt deviations from virtue; and how ſtrongly ought we to guard ourſelves againſt the temptations ſpread by vice, to render us unworthy of being ranked among human beings!

What a buſtle do I make about an affair which would give Sedley the higheſt ſatisfaction! — But you know, Mountney, I ever held it barbarous as well as diſhonourable to attempt to injure the weaker ſex, who are formed by nature to ſtand in need of our protection—I never took any delight in practiſing the arts of ſeduction, by which

ſo many men ruin thoſe women whom they pretend to love; and always was of opinion, that a man of ſenſe ought to be aſhamed of thoſe arts, looking on the ſeducer as an infamous *character*.—How came I to be thus, at laſt, entangled!——But you, tho' at a diſtance, ſaw the danger into which I ruſhed with my eyes open.

To what purpoſe, however, are all theſe reflections! they are now too late — the miſchief is done.

Diſtracted with terror leſt ſhe ſhould, as I have hinted, make any diſcovery to my wife, I went at the appointed hour.—There—but I cannot paint the ſcene—ſhe fainted away on my boſom, and ſo melted me with her ſighs and tears, and alarming apprehenſions, that I could not help compaſſionating the diſtreſs which I had, involuntarily, occaſioned.

Thus am I ſinking deeper and deeper under the double weight of guilt and ſhame. Harriot has all my pity; Eudocia all my love, my heart, my ſoul.—Yet, in

the midſt of this confuſion and diſquietude, many times in a day do I wiſh that my wife was as tender, as fond as my —— I will not write a word which I abhor.

Tell me, now, my dear Ned, how I ſhall get rid of this horrid buſineſs, and you will be my friend indeed!

LETTER XXXIX.

Miſs OLIVIA HEBER to Miſs HEBER.

AT length, my dear ſiſter, I am come to a reſolution, whatever it may coſt me, to conquer an inclination which can never make me happy.

Sir Charles, I ſee, loves nobody but lady Avon, who, infinitely wiſer than I am, knows how to deſpiſe a man, who dares to inſult her with a behaviour, of which, ſhe is ſenſible, ſhe ought not to approve. Lively, and, in appearance, thoughtleſs as ſhe is, ſometimes ſhe is, nevertheleſs, diſcreet. I once thought, that my lord would be much better ſatisfied with her, if ſhe gave up more of her time to him; but I can't tell what to think now. I am afraid he begins to be tired of waiting for what will, in all probability, never happen.—He never uſed to leave her, but when neceſſity

ceſſity urged him: he is now, frequently, abſent, and eſpecially in an evening, for ſeveral hours together. My lady takes notice of his late hours to me, but not in a manner expreſſive of her diſapprobation: ſhe only mentions his ſtaying from her, as ſhe would any common occurrence. Yet, ſhe ſeems glad, I think, to ſee him when he returns.

Where-ever my lord goes, he is not much diverted, I imagine; for he always looks melancholy and unhappy.

Mr. Mountney called on us t'other night, juſt after he came to town, and appeared to be ſurprized at not finding my lord at home.

My lady ſaid, with a lively ſmile, "Your friend is grown a faſhionable huſband, Mr. Mountney."

He replied, rather gravely, "Is he not grown ſo becauſe your ladyſhip is too faſhionable a wife?"

Eudocia coloured; but, without ſeeming to be in the leaſt offended, entered into ſo

agreeable a converſation with him, that he declared he was quite ſorry it was not in his power to ſtay longer.—When he left us, he deſired her to tell my lord that he was going out of town next morning.——But what is all this to the purpoſe?—Yet I ſay any thing to hinder my thoughts from dwelling on the ſubject, in which my heart is moſt intereſted, and which I willingly would forget; for while it engages my attention, it murders my peace.

Sir Charles came in ſoon afterwards, and looked as if he enjoyed my lord's abſence; tho' he was obliged to come to *me*, as my lady kept him at a diſtance.—He can't help being particular to *ſome* woman.——I will write no more about him at preſent.

You don't tell me upon what terms you are with Edmund: we do not, therefore, correſpond upon a par—You are acquainted with every movement of *my* heart; but keep all the emotions of your own to yourſelf.—Unkind Alicia.

LETTER

LETTER XL.

Miſs HEBER to Miſs OLIVIA HEBER.

YOU deſire to hear about Edmund; I am but too ready to gratify you; but my long narration will, poſſibly, prove a dull one.——

You know his partiality to our dear lady Avon from a child, and in what manner he diſtinguiſhed her as he grew up, by preſenting the fineſt fruit and flowers to her.—You know too, that he was abſent from home when Sir William Tameworth fetched away his niece, and carried her to London: and that his melancholy, from the time of his return, increaſed till ſhe was married.

As he ſtill continued to come to our houſe, I felt a compaſſion for him which I could not conceal, and endeavoured, by every method I could think of, to chear

his drooping ſpirits, and remove his dejection: but my endeavours were ſo ineffectual, that I became almoſt as melancholy as himſelf.

By ſeeing me thus, involuntarily, fall in with his humour, he took a fancy to my company. He ſat with me for hours. We ſighed together; and ſeemed, while we mingled our ſighs, not to want the addition of words to make us more ſociable.

At length he opened his lips, and ſpoke of our dear Eudocia, but in ſuch terms of admiration and delight, and complained ſo tenderly of his being for ever deprived of all hopes of trying to ſucceed with her, that I could no longer ſupport it—I broke out, involuntarily, in the ſame complaints: I wept, I ſobbed, I was almoſt choaked: at laſt I ſaid, "Had ſhe but known what you have ſuffered, had you but told her how fondly you eſteemed her, ſhe *would*, ſhe *muſt* have heard you, and been happy."

Here I ſtopped, conſcious of having ſaid too much, yet I was too much concerned for him

him to repent of what I had uttered: my heart was full of a pleaſing ſorrow: I was eager to indulge a kind of delicious grief, rendered ſo meerly becauſe I was deſirous of ſharing it with him.

He was far from being unaffected by my ſenſations on his account:—He ran to me, ſat down by me, took my hands in his, telling me at the ſame time, that tho' he was pained to the heart at giving me any diſquiet, he felt a conſolation he never thought to have received, from my gentle pity, which had given eaſe to a boſom quite overwhelmed before by affliction: "But ſtill, dear Alicia, added he, remembrance keeps that affliction alive—What tranſports would have been mine, if Eudocia could have compaſſionated my ſufferings as much as you do!

I bluſhed exceſſively at theſe words; I turned my face from him, while he cried, "Do not be diſpleaſed either with yourſelf or me: I am ready to confeſs, that I have not

not yet deſerved ſo great, ſo deſirable a proof of your friendſhip: but indeed I will not, I cannot be ungrateful."

This ſpeech ſhocked me ſtill more, and convinced me that he had diſcovered my ſentiments in his favour. I became, therefore, abaſhed to the greateſt degree: my tears, however, continued to flow—I ſtrove to avert my face; but I could not take my hands from him, which he preſſed in his, and frequently kiſſed, begging me not to make myſelf uneaſy, leſt I ſhould by ſo doing injure my health.

I was not proof againſt the affecting tenderneſs of this behaviour—My heart had been before ſoftened beyond expreſſion; and I could not help telling him, tho' covered with bluſhes, that his diſquietude had touched me, and that I ſhould not be chearful till I ſaw *him* ſo.

From that time, till juſt before lady Avon came down to the Wood, we had ſeveral long converſations of the ſame nature;

ture; but in theſe converſations he never profeſſed more than a ſincere friendſhip for me.

When Eudocia arrived, he was upon a viſit to a family about twenty miles off.

At his return, he ſtarted to hear of her being at ſo ſmall a diſtance from him: yet diſcovered a deſire to ſee *her* and lord Avon, who was, he ſaid, according to the information he had received, extremely amiable. He, therefore, offered to accompany me one afternoon to the Wood.

I would not diſſuade him from ſuch a proceeding, leſt he might miſtake my motives, tho' I feared that his viſit would only increaſe his vexation: it had, however, a contrary effect—He was, indeed, at firſt, dejected, but, in a few days, became abſolutely another creature.

On my mentioning my ſurprize, and declaring my pleaſure at the agreeable change in his looks and carriage—he replied, that tho' he found Eudocia more lovely than ever, there appeared a thorough eaſe in her

mind,

mind, which, while he was glad to ſee it, gave him no advantageous idea of her, as ſhe could not have appeared with ſo much ſerenity, after ſuch a difference with my lord, if ſhe had been tenderly attached to him.

Here I took our friend's part, and ſaid, that as my lord had been under a miſtake, and accuſed her wrongfully, I could ſee no reaſon for her being uneaſy after a reconciliation between them.

"I will not diſpute with you, madam, replied he; but I am ſure, that had you been in *her* place, you would not have been ſo eaſy after ſuch a diſagreement."

I made no anſwer. I dared not to proceed upon a ſubject, with any freedom, ſo delicate and ſo intereſting.

Since that time I have ſcarce heard him mention lady Avon, but his carriage to me is exactly the ſame, very obliging; rather more tender than the moſt affectionate brother's. However, as he only profeſſes the ſincereſt friendſhip for me, tho' he is perpetually

petually with me, I am not encouraged to expect any thing farther; and, therefore, when we are ſeparated, you may imagine that I ſhall not, as my heart muſt go with him, be very happy;—yet I don't ſee what excuſe I can frame for the prohibition of his viſits to me. My father is, as he ever has been, extremely fond of him.—His character is generally allowed to be faultleſs; and *his* father knows, undoubtedly, of the intimacy between us.

And now, Olivia, what can I ſay to you? How can I, with propriety, adviſe *you*, while I ſtand ſo much in need of admonition myſelf? Yet, tho' I am ſenſible of my weakneſs—(if my eſteem for ſo amiable a man muſt be pronounced a weakneſs) I am, I freely own, unable to conquer it.

Sir Charles, from what I have heard of him, is not, I think, ſo deſerving a man as Mr. Haſtings: but lord and lady Avon know much more about him than I do; therefore, as *they* are your true friends, conſult them, and let their deciſions influence

ence your conduct. *They*, as well as I, are inclined to charge him with acting in a dishonourable manner, by not making proper propoſals to my father, without whoſe knowledge and approbation you, certainly, ought not to engage yourſelf.

LETTER

LETTER XLI.

Lord AVON to Mr. MOUNTNEY.

I WAS moſt unfortunate in being from home when you called; but I am never to be otherwiſe: every thing goes contrary to my wiſhes. I wiſhed to talk with you indeed, tho' reaſon tells me too plainly what I ought to do; and I had endeavoured to liſten to her voice—I reſolved to ſee Harriot no more; but I had not courage to communicate my determination to her, fearing that her ſighs and tears, which I could not help expecting, would melt me to compaſſion, would almoſt unman me. —Reſolving, however, at all events, to give her up; and to hinder her from having any opportunity to diſcover our affair to my wife, by never leaving them together by themſelves, I ſtuck as cloſe as poſſible to

to lady Avon. I was, indeed, frequently ſhouldered out of my place by her adorers; but I recovered my ſituation as well as I could. I alſo endeavoured, to the utmoſt of my power, to exclude Mrs. Minchin from our parties.—In ſpite of all my *fineſſe* ſhe was too cunning for me, and had ſecured herſelf a corner in our coach to Ranelagh laſt Friday, without my knowledge.

I had told lady Avon, that I ſhould make a party, and deſired that ſhe would engage nobody but Miſs Heber.

While we were ſitting after dinner, I accidentally aſked her if ſhe had ordered the coach to be ready at the uſual hour.

"Why no," replied ſhe, with a look which expreſſed an unwillingneſs to tell me, "Mrs. Minchin can't go till nine."

"Mrs. Minchin!" cried I, looking ſurprized and vexed, "how came ſhe to be of our party? I thought we were to have gone by ourſelves."

"So I deſigned, ſaid my lady; but ſhe came this morning, while you was with general

general Brett, and was ſo importunate that I could not refuſe her."

You cannot think how I was mortified to find, that the very woman, whom I had taken ſuch pains to ſhun, had contrived to thruſt herſelf into the coach with me; not doubting but ſhe would either make advances, or load me with reproaches, even under the noſe of my wife.

Her behaviour was according to my expectations. Reſolving to keep up an abſolute indifference, ſhe behaved in a manner which was ſufficient to diſcover to the moſt unexperienced perſon on what terms we were: yet my Eudocia ſeemed not to obſerve her behaviour; but, as ſoon as we entered the rotunda, left me and the lady to act as we thought proper, and, with Olivia, joined ſome of her acquaintance.

Fain would I have followed her, in order to have ſhaken off my widow, or to have availed myſelf of her *douçeurs* to ſee, agreeably to my firſt plan, if my Eudocia would

be

be jealous or not.—But things were gone too far with Mrs. Minchin.

No ſooner were we left in a *tête a tête*, in which you may ſuppoſe we could not be left long in ſo public a place, than ſhe told me, that my carriage to her had been inhuman to the laſt degree; and if I did not immediately conſent to go home with her, ſhe could not anſwer for what her frenzy might drive her to. "I ſuppoſe, added ſhe, that, indifferent as you appear to be, you will not hear of my diſtraction without feeling ſome remorſe for having been the cauſe of it.—I have loved beyond reaſon, 'tis true; beyond diſcretion: but what is one or the other,—(tearing off her gloves with an agitation that actually bordered on madneſs) when put in competition with the man on whom I doat with the higheſt extravagance?"

I was really quite frightened at her behaviour—She not only expoſed *me* but *herſelf*. To quiet her, I took her by the hand, and pro-

promiſed to viſit her as a friend that very evening.

"As a friend, my lord! replied ſhe—muſt a cold friendſhip be all the happineſs I am to expect with you? No—I deſpiſe, from my ſoul, ſuch a tame inſipid connexion, nor will ever ſubmit to it: take back your heart, my lord, and give it to your idol of a wife: but take care that you and ſhe both do not ſeverely repent of this curſed coolneſs to a woman, whoſe perſon is no way contemptible, tho' not, perhaps, ſo beautiful as lady Avon's, but who loved you with a thouſand times more ardor.

This ſpeech, you may imagine, was ſpoken with a tone and manner adapted to the words: I was amazed and confounded—To increaſe my ſhame and diſquietude, I ſaw, on turning my head, my wife and Olivia near me.

I was rooted to the ground;—yet began to recover a little at Eudocia's approach, who ſaid, with a moſt obliging voice,

"Mrs.

"Mrs. Minchin, we have been in ſearch of you for ſome time."

My widow, tho' ſeemingly regardleſs of every thing but the object of her reſentment, on being thus accoſted, ſtrove to conceal her emotions, by clapping her handkerchief up to her face; and complaining of a ſudden indiſpoſition, begged me to ſee her home, as ſhe was afraid ſhe ſhould faint away, with the great heat of the room, if ſhe ſtayed any longer.

I could not well refuſe her requeſt; but I went with the utmoſt reluctance; with particular reluctance, as I left my wife and Olivia with Sedley, who juſt then joined us, and who ſaw me lead out Mrs. Minchin with a ſneer of ſatisfaction, for which I could have cut his throat.

During our ride to her houſe, and after our arrival at it, ſhe practiſed every art in her power, and employed tears, intreaties, menaces, and fits, to move me.—In return, I endeavoured to make her ſenſible of the injury

injury I was now doing to her as well as to my wife, by continuing a connexion which had already been carried too far, and which I was determined to break off for ever: aſſuring her, however, at the ſame time, that I would always be her ſincere friend, tho' I could not be her lover; and adding, that ſhe would, I hoped, when ſhe came to herſelf, be convinced ſhe ought rather to eſteem, than blame, me for ſo laudable a conduct; a conduct, in which her own honour, as well as mine, was ſo much concerned.

"Honour? cried ſhe—Oh! name not the word—The man, who is deaf to compaſſion, who is deſtitute of humanity, can have no honour.—Beſides, Sir, continued ſhe, riſing, with fury in her eyes, as I take it, *my* character alone ſuffers upon this occaſion; your's is rather raiſed among thoſe of my thoughtleſs ſex who admire lord Avon, as I have done, before they know him to be a villain."

There was but too much truth in her ſpeech, Mountney; how ſeverely ſarcaſtical againſt the ſex! If women would ſhun and diſcover contempt for the man, who, however ſpecious in his appearance, purſues only to betray, there would not be ſuch a character exiſting among us.—But let me not blame her; I drew her into a criminal connexion; I wiſh heartily never to have ſuch a connexion with her again—if I can extricate myſelf out of this confounded affair, without alarming my Eudocia, I never *will*:—But my Eudocia, I am afraid, muſt be rendered unhappy by this violent woman, whom I could not perſuade to part quietly with me, tho' I ſtaid with her till near three o'clock. She vowed to the very laſt moment, that not only myſelf, but my wife, ſhould feel the weight of her revenge, as I had for ever ruined her reputation.

I broke from her, at laſt; but gueſs my aſtoniſhment and concern, to find my Eudocia

docia ſitting in her dreſſing-room with Olivia, between three and four in the morning!

I ran to her, tho' I was actually aſhamed to look at her; and, claſping her in my arms, aſked her what ſhe did out of her bed; and if ſhe meant to kill me by hazarding her health?

"Rather let me aſk *you*, replied ſhe, with a languor in her ſweet eyes that I never had obſerved before, and that made her appear inexpreſſibly lovely, whether *your* health may not alſo be endangered by keeping ſuch late hours? Beſides, I was fearful leſt you ſhould have met with ſome accident.—How did you leave Mrs. Minchin?"

I actually bluſhed, Mountney, while I replied, "Very indifferent"—Turning my head aſide, I then aſked her if ſhe did not want reſt?—On the delivery of *that* queſtion, Olivia wiſhed us good night.

For *my* part, I never cloſed my eyes—My dear girl, her heart being as pure as

her perſon was pleaſing, ſlept ſweetly; and when we roſe, expreſſed a kind inquietude about the lowneſs of my ſpirits — (which was the excuſe for a dejection, which I could not poſſibly ſhake off) that doubly endeared her to me, but at the ſame time ſharpened the pangs which I felt for having acted in ſo weak, ſo ridiculous, nay ſo criminal a manner.

She ſtaid at home with me all the evening, and the following day, and ſtrove, by numberleſs little engaging ways, to enliven me. She read to me paſſages out of ſome of her favourite authors: ſhe ſung to me, played upon the harpſichord and mandoline: in ſhort, ſhe was more enchanting than ever; and I began to come a little to myſelf, to feel myſelf as happy as I was when ſhe firſt became mine.

The dear angel having wearied herſelf to divert me, and not being very well, grew reſtleſs and uneaſy after dinner: ſhe ſat firſt in one chair, and then in another; and, when I declared my anxiety about her, only

ly replied, with a languiſhing ſmile, that ſhe was only ſleepy.

I would have had her gone up to her chamber, in order to refreſh herſelf with a little ſleep, but ſhe would not leave me.—I reſted her head on my ſhoulder and on my boſom alternately, but nothing would do—At laſt I took her up in my arms, and laid her on the ſopha, and, ſitting by her in a chair, *read* while Olivia went to work by us.

She fell aſleep preſently.

When we had been but a ſhort time in this compoſed ſtate, *in burſt* Mrs. Minchin, followed by Sedley,—the only two people in the world, perhaps, whom I wiſhed not to ſee. They put me, indeed, into ſuch an ill humour, that I, peeviſhly enough, begged them not to wake my wife, who was not very well.

The lady looked as pale as death when ſhe entered, and ſeemed to be in violent hyſterics: ſhe trembled; her colour went

and came, and ſhe ſighed as if her heart was juſt ready to break.

As to the gentleman, he ſeemed to be all life, gaiety, and aſſurance: I wondered, indeed, that he had not waked my angel with the noiſe which he made in coming up ſtairs; but ſhe ſtill remained in a profound ſleep, while the impertinent devil placed himſelf directly over againſt her, and took ſuch a meaſure of her elegant form with his impudent eyes, that I began to grow exceedingly diſturbed.—Never, ſurely, was there ſuch a groupe of diſtracted mortals. Sedley ſat ſtaring at my wife; Olivia let fall her work from her fingers in watching his motions; and Mrs. Minchin fixed her large tender eyes in ſo expreſſive a manner on *my* face, that I ſhould have wiſhed myſelf at a conſiderable diſtance, could I have ventured to have left my wife with that fellow Sedley, who really provoked me ſo by his looks, that I was almoſt diſtracted. Riſing, therefore, I planted myſelf exactly between him and lady

lady Avon, and endeavoured to draw his attention—he then, artful devil, riſing alſo, dextrouſly threw himſelf into ſuch an attitude, on one ſide of me, that he ſtill faced her, ſtill ſtood loſt in admiration, gazing at her beautiful figure: I became abſolutely impatient, and was in a thouſand fidgets—At length, I walked backward and forward before her, (tho' ſoftly, for fear of waking her) to hide her, in ſome meaſure, from his curious eyes: but he contrived to peep at her, not without ſmiling at my care to diſappoint him; even Mrs. Minchin ſmiled, in ſpite of her vexation.—They almoſt made me mad.

After having been a good while thus tormented, I determined to hinder Sedley, if poſſible, from enjoying his impertinence: I, therefore, took a handkerchief, and gently hung it over my angel's face; but I could not, with *that*, conceal her fine proportioned figure, nor her charming little foot, which was ſtill expoſed to this rogue's view. To provoke me more, neither he

nor Mrs. Minchin could any way ſtifle their mirth upon the occaſion; eſpecially Sedley, who, willing, I ſuppoſe, to have ſome pretence for his laughing, ſat down by Olivia, and making ſome nonſenſical obſervations upon her work, found freſh matter to excite his laughter. By ſo doing he threw *her* into confuſion, and *me* into a kind of fury; and I was fearful too leſt the noiſe ſhould terrify my Eudocia.

At laſt ſhe ſtirred.

Anxiouſly apprehending, that ſhe might be alarmed at finding her face covered, or ſurprized at the ſight of company, I raiſed her gently in my arms, hiding her face in my boſom, while I ſoftly told her who were in the room.

She diſengaged herſelf from my arms, bluſhing, and breathing a thouſand ſweets, and made an apology to the company, who ought, indeed, to have apologized for their unſeaſonable intruſion.

Mrs. Minchin immediately changed colour, and ſoon afterwards fainted away.—

Every

Every body hurried to aſſiſt her, and my charming Eudocia behaved with particular tenderneſs.—She recovered, only to let fall a ſhower of tears. As ſoon as ſhe could ſpeak, ſhe deſired me to aſſiſt her in getting to her coach.

I could not refuſe her requeſt, tho' I wiſhed to get rid of her for ever.

As ſhe walked to the coach, leaning on my arm, ſhe told me, that ſhe had again expoſed herſelf, and to my wife too; but that my fondneſs for lady Avon was like a dagger to her heart.—"Yet I ſee, added ſhe, that nothing can move you. I have been to blame, my lord; I have tried, but tried in vain, to ſecure a heart which never *felt* for *me*.—What have I not loſt by your inſenſibility!—all that I valued moſt, *your* eſteem and my own reputation?—Yet, as lady Avon ſtill treats me with civility, do not, by expoſing me to her, doubly mortify me; for I ſhall then be the object of *her* contempt as well as your's."

" My wife, madam, replied I, will, I am aſſured, naturally prompted by her good-ſenſe and good-nature, treat you always with politeneſs; and you may depend upon the greateſt conſideration and reſpect on *my* part."

" Conſideration and reſpect! H—ns! is it come to this?—and after having doated on you to an extravagance not to be deſcribed, am I to hear no other language from you? Dare you talk to me of reſpect?"

With theſe words ſhe flung from me into the coach, and immediately drew up the glaſs, even while I ſtood bowing before her. I therefore turned ſhort from her, and hurried into the houſe; tho' I preſently heard the glaſs let down, and Mrs. Minchin calling after me.

Juſt when I entered the parlour, how was I alarmed to ſee my wife ſtruggling to withdraw her hand from Sedley.

The moment ſhe ſaw me, ſhe cried, "Upon my word, Sir Charles, you are the moſt provoking creature I ever met with."

How—how's this? ſaid I, agitated by I know not how many different emotions, which almoſt rendered me incapable of chaſtizing that fellow's impudence, who, with all that inſolent eaſineſs peculiar to him, anſwered, "Upon my ſoul, Avon, there's nothing at all the matter: I only wanted to try my lady's ring upon Miſs Heber's finger, to ſee if it would fit her; becauſe, you know, I may want ſuch a one ſoon upon a certain occaſion: and I dare ſwear, both the pretty little fingers are of a ſize, continued he, catching up Olivia's hand, and kiſſing it eagerly."

I wiſhed him at the devil; for I am certain this was only an excuſe; and looked ſo exceedingly out of humour at him, that I believe he thought he might take his leave: for he left the room ſoon afterwards, after a long whiſper with Olivia.

Thus am I perpetually tormented: my wife is eternally haunted by this fellow; and I am myſelf diſtracted with doubts and fears concerning Mrs. Minchin.—

What meaſures ſhall I purſue to get rid of them?

LETTER

LETTER XLII.

Sir CHARLES SEDLEY to Col. ACKWORTH.

IT is as I gueſſed: Avon has entangled himſelf finely with the widow. Matters have been carried to ſuch lengths between them, that ſhe upbraided him t'other night at Ranelagh with having deſerted her for his wife; and in terms too, at once ſo extravagantly fond, and ſo exquiſitely reproachful, that the attention of a great part of the company was attracted by their converſation.

I, who have always my eyes and ears about me, preſently found how things went; and being unwilling to loſe an opportunity of letting my lady ſee her huſband in his true colours, drew her, imperceptibly, near them; and had the ſatisfaction to know, that ſhe ſaw and heard

enough to convince her, that all-beautiful as ſhe is, ſhe cannot keep him entirely to herſelf—A ſpecial hint for her, if ſhe has but ſpirit to make proper uſe of it.—But, upon my ſoul, ſhe is ſomething more than woman,—for (tho' I am ſure ſhe is not dull of apprehenſion) ſhe did not diſcover the leaſt uneaſineſs, jealouſy, envy, or the ſlighteſt ſigns of any other paſſion of a diſturbing kind, which ſuch a diſcovery would have naturally raiſed in the breaſt of a woman who had a grain of reſentment in her conſtitution.

Poſſibly, after all, ſhe does not love her huſband well enough to be alarmed about him; but then I cannot find that ſhe prefers any other man to him—Some women love only themſelves,—perhaps ſhe is one of *them*: and yet I am not inclined to believe that ſhe is of ſo ſelfiſh a caſt: ſhe has, on the contrary, an expreſſion in her charming eyes, which ſhews her to be not inſenſible to the joys of mutual love; and,

from

from what I have ſince ſeen, I am ſatisfied ſhe really *does* feel ſomething like a paſſion, at leaſt, for Avon.

We had a very high ſcene, you muſt know, the very next day after the diſcovery at Ranelagh.

I dropped into my lord's, to ſee how things went on; and meeting the widow juſt ſtepping out of her coach, we proceeded together, and caught them quite *en famille*.—But what a ſight was preſented to my raviſhed eyes!—Lady Avon, was reclined in the moſt inviting attitude upon the ſopha, aſleep; near her ſat her watchful dragon reading, while the little attending ſiſter Grace, Olivia, was employed with her needle on the other ſide.

You have ſeen a ſleeping Venus, by the moſt eminent French and Italian maſters; but you never ſaw a living lady Avon; only *my* goddeſs was cloathed—but the drapery was ſo eaſy and ſo elegant, that the imagination was but the more inflamed by it.—She was in a white ſpotted ſilk, the folds

of

of which were, by her negligent attitude, thrown into directions that diſcovered the lovely formation of her whole figure to the greateſt advantage.—Her head reſted on one of her beautiful arms, while the other was ſtretched careleſsly by her ſide. Her face received new charms from the cloſure of her eyes, too bright to be ſteadily examined when open: and, as they were ſhut, the long thick fringe of her eye-laſhes appeared more conſpicuouſly pleaſing. Her cap, which was a little *derangée* from her ſituation, had puſhed a lock of her fine hair over her ſnowy forehead, which gave a new, uncommon, and irreſiſtible charm to her whole face; her other locks, which had not been confined, wantonly ſtrayed over her neck, the lower part of which, and alſo her delicate boſom, were decently covered with a fine laced muſlin handkerchief.

When I had ſuffered my tranſported eyes to wander over her lovely features, I threw them downwards to her feet; one of them

them peeped from beneath a pink ſilk petticoat, and lay deliciouſly expoſed to my obſervation in a white ſattin ſlipper.

Imagine what tumultuous emotions were excited by theſe bewitching objects—I believe I looked all I felt; for the alarmed huſband, who envied me only the poor pleaſure of gazing on her, roſe with impatience, and ſtood before her to ſkreen her from my admiring eyes.—

Faith, my lord, thought I, if theſe are your tricks, I ſhall be too cunning for you —and ſo, George, I peeped down on one ſide of him, and then on t'other; while the jealous monkey fretted and fidgetted backward and forward, to a degree beyond all endurance. Even Mrs. Minchin, who had turned pale with envy on her firſt coming in, could not forbear ſmiling; but when he covered his wife's face with a handkerchief, we both burſt into ſuch a violent laugh, that I actually thought he would have killed us; and I was forced to talk downright nonſenſe to Olivia, that I might be decently

ly authorized to indulge my merriment; and indulge it I did, I ſwear, moſt heartily: but I will not anſwer for my languiſhing widow; for, upon Avon's taking his wife in his arms, on her waking, and ſmothering her divine face in his boſom, which I could very willingly have done for him, Mrs. Minchin ſwooned away.—

More buſtle.

The charming wife good-naturedly ran to aſſiſt her rival, who, on recovering, with many ſighs and tears, and much diſorder, begged my lord to ſee her to her coach.

Suppoſing he was then ſafe for the night, I began to make ſome ſlight remarks upon my lord's intimacy with the lady who had juſt quitted the room, and on his readineſs to go off with her: taking lady Avon's delicious hand at the ſame time, and ſwearing that were the hand I held but mine, I never could bear to touch another woman's.

I was going, after that ſpeech, almoſt to devour it with kiſſes.

In

In came, at that inſtant, my lord.

The dear creature and I were in the midſt of a delightful ſtruggle, which reduced me to the neceſſity of inventing a good round lie upon the ſpot, and ſent me to Olivia, in order to ſave appearances, and make my veracity unſuſpected.

What do you think now? can I reaſonably encourage any hopes from lady Avon's knowing that her huſband has been falſe to her? Never, I fear, may I venture encourage them; not, at leaſt, while he is ſo jealous and ſo watchful over her conduct,—and by his vigilance and ſuſpicion, proves the force of his paſſion for her. It may be ſaid, indeed, that men are ſometimes jealous only of their honour; but when ſo lovely a woman is in the caſe, honour will, I fancy, be the laſt conſideration: it would be the laſt, I know, with me; for let me periſh, if I would not ſacrifice all mine, this moment, to become poſſeſt of lady Avon.

Write

Write ſoon, dear George, to your ſincere friend, but in no ſmall perplexity and no little agitation.

CHARLES SEDLEY.

P. S. A jealous huſband is the devil to deal with: are you not of *my* mind? Write ſoon, write freely, and tell me, on a nice review of my ſituation, whether I have moſt reaſon to hope or deſpair?

LETTER

LETTER XLIII.

Miſs OLIVIA HEBER to Miſs HEBER.

YOUR account of your ſituation with Edmund, my dear ſiſter, has affected me a good deal, becauſe I ſee you are deeply engaged in a tender affair which is as little likely to prove ſucceſsful according to your wiſhes, as that which I have upon *my* hands is to turn out agreeably to *mine*: happineſs is certainly not often the lot of the moſt deſerving: how then can *I*, ſo full of failings, expect it? Even our dear Eudocia, adorned with every charm, and graced with every virtue, cannot keep my lord to herſelf—Will you believe that lord Avon, whom you ſaw ſo exceſſively fond of her, can poſſibly love another woman?

"What do you mean?"

I will explain myſelf:

Among

Among the number of people who viſited lady Avon upon her marriage was a young widow lady; ſhe was, indeed, preſent at the ceremony — a Mrs. Minchin; very agreeable in her perſon, and of ſo obliging a behaviour, that Eudocia preferred her to all her new acquaintance, and ſhe was frequently with us both at home and abroad.

My lord, who is polite to all women, was conſequently polite to this lady: but, he, in a ſhort time grew particular in his behaviour to her, praiſed her to Doſſy in the higheſt terms, and treated her with unuſual civility.

For ſome time my lady imagined that he only behaved with the greater civility, as ſhe herſelf had diſtinguiſhed her; and I was, I own, inclined to be of her ladyſhip's opinion. On a ſudden, my lord grew thoughtful and melancholy, and ſtaid from home for hours together.—His frequent and long abſences, however, tho' unuſual, did not all diſturb my lady, as ſhe placed a thorough

thorough confidence in him; and as ſhe is lively and gay herſelf, ſhe ſaid, when we could not help taking notice of theſe abſences, that if *ſhe* did as ſhe pleaſed, *he* certainly had a right to do the ſame. She was I believe, at firſt, too much taken up with her own amuſements to think a great deal about *him.*

One night, on his ſtaying out later than he had ever done, and appearing ſtrangely diſordered when he came home, ſhe began to fear that he was ill:—As ſhe loved him tenderly, ſhe was alarmed, eſpecially as he continued to be extremely dejected.

The next day ſhe came into *my* room, in which I was reading, and with an uncommon ſerioufneſs in her countenance.

Sitting down by me, ſhe ſaid, "Something has happened, Olivia, which I never could have dreamt of—My lord is, I fancy, very much attached to Mrs. Minchin; but, poſſibly, my thoughtleſs behaviour, tho' I am ſure I never deſigned to offend him by it, has totally diſguſted him. Yet I will

not

not upbraid him, nor let him ſee that I have diſcovered what he ſtrives to conceal from me. I love him, I confeſs, too ſincerely to ſee him thus, apparently, uneaſy without wiſhing to relieve him: and he accepts of my endeavours to pleaſe him and to remove his anxiety with ſeeming tranſport — he ſighs, however, as if ſomething lay on his mind too heavy to be endured. Would I could remove it! continued the ſweet girl, while a tear ſtood trembling in each eye.

How I loved her, my Alicia, for the mildneſs and the tenderneſs of her diſpoſition, for her candour and conſideration! yet unwilling to give credit to what I found ſo diſagreeable, and ſtill more unwilling to have her unhappy, I told her that ſhe was, perhaps, miſtaken; and might look upon that as a certainty which exiſted only in her own imagination.

"No, replied ſhe, calmly: I ſaw the whole affair this morning; ſaw it in the looks which Mrs. Minchin darted at me, when

when ſhe found me with my arm upon my lord's ſhoulder, and read it ſtill plainer in his confuſion on being caught by her leaning on my boſom."

He is not, then, leſs tender to you, my dear? ſaid I.

"No, anſwered ſhe; but he is, ſomehow, leſs happy."—

I did not think ſhe was half ſo miſerable as I ſhould have been about ſuch an affair. She continued to behave in her uſual manner to my lord, who, tho' he ſtayed out again very late after that interview, grew fonder of my lady than ever, till Mrs. Minchin forced herſelf, I may ſay, to be of our party to Ranelagh, where, by keeping cloſe to lord Avon, ſhe kept off every body elſe.—My lady and I, therefore, thought it but prudent to leave them to themſelves.

Sir Charles Sedley ſoon after coming up, told us that a fond couple had juſt had a tender quarrel.—"Not very tender neither, added he, for the lady ſeemed to be under the dominion of more paſſions than one.

She has torn her gloves all to tatters: will you venture to take a peep at the enamoured pair?"

Eudocia, without thinking that ſhe could be in the leaſt concerned in this affair, followed him, not at all minding which way ſhe was going.

We came at laſt cloſe behind lord Avon and Mrs. Minchin; and heard ſome things which could not be pleaſing to my lady; tho' I believe no wife could bear the hearing of them better: for with all the good humour in the world ſhe accoſted Mrs. Minchin, who was, or pretended to be ſick, for an excuſe to go out with my lord.

We were left to the care of Sir Charles, who ſeemed, I thought, too officious about my lady; and made ſeveral unneceſſary obſervations upon my lord's conduct, which our friend did not, I could ſee, approve of, tho' ſhe purpoſely avoided taking notice of them but by a ſilent contempt.

Sir Charles either did not, or would not underſtand her carriage; but as other com-

pany

pany joined us he had no opportunity to be as particular as he wiſhed to be.

When we came home lady Avon, not finding my lord, expreſſed much uneaſineſs about him, as Sedley, ſhe ſaid, had mentioned a quarrel: and indeed, the lady ſeemed to be warm. "Poſſibly, added Eudocia, theſe differences between them make him ſo unhappy: I cannot reſt till I ſee him, continued ſhe; and ſo, my dear, do ſit up with me till he comes home.

He came not till it was very late; and then looked ſo dejected, and ſo wretched: yet diſcovered much ſurpriſe, and declared much concern at finding my lady up.—When ſhe enquired after his health, he complained of an uncommon lowneſs of ſpirits; and when ſhe renewed her enquiries the next day, he anſwered her with the ſame complaints. Our dear amiable friend felt a ſincere compaſſion for his diſquietude, and practiſed every little art ſhe could think of to draw him out of the reveries into which he frequently fell, in which indeed

he was almoſt every moment plunged.—She ſung, ſhe danced, ſhe played, ſhe read, by turns; and all her endeavours to pleaſe were received as they deſerved to be received, with the greateſt tenderneſs.—She quite wearied herſelf to divert him; and having ſat up ſo late the night before, and not being in a condition to bear fatigue, ſhe grew ſo reſtleſs that my lord, having prevailed on her to try to ſleep, laid her on her ſopha.

While ſhe was reclined on the ſopha, in came Sir Charles and Mrs. Minchin. The former ſeemed loſt in admiration at the ſight of my lady, and the latter fainted away upon her waking.—When ſhe recovered my lord conducted her to her coach. During his abſence Sir Charles, after having ſaid a number of fine things to my lady, caught her hand, and was juſt going to put it to his lips, while ſhe ſtrove to withdraw it; when my lord returned, and appeared to be much alarmed at what he ſaw. Sir Charles pretended that he was only going

to

to try *her* ring upon *my* finger, and began to kiſs my hand with violence—I, who ſaw thro' all his hypocriſy as well as my friend, became quite diſguſted; yet——But there can be no hopes of happineſs with a man ſo full of deceit; beſides, if lord Avon, the fondeſt of all huſbands, can follow other women when he has ſo unexceptionable a wife, how can *I* expect conſtancy in a huſband; and where is the man who may be depended upon?

Mr. Mountney appears to be a man of ſtrict honour; but a man muſt have uncommon rectitude of heart, and be thoroughly able to conquer his paſſions, or the endowments of his mind will but partly recommend him; at leaſt, to *me*. No, my dear ſiſter, I perceive, as I ſaid before, that thoſe who live free from any attachments but the attachments of friendſhip, have more reaſon to expect happineſs. Yet even friendſhip will not exclude anxiety: and I believe I now feel for our dear friend more than ſhe feels for herſelf.

Lord Avon ſaid, t'other day, that too much ſenſibility was a misfortune. I think I can readily ſubſcribe to that opinion; and *you* will not, I truſt, differ from me.

LETTER

LETTER XLIV.

Mr. MOUNTNEY to Lord AVON.

IN anſwer to your laſt, I reply, "Leave London immediately; and take your wife and family down to Devonſhire, to Derbyſhire, to any *ſhire*, if you do but fly from an artful woman who will not only do every thing in her power to ſet you againſt my lady, but will, moſt probably, make an attempt to ſeduce *her* alſo.—Your Eudocia is, I dare believe, unſullied at preſent in perſon and in mind; but take care to keep her ſo. The perſuaſions and example of one woman without principles do more miſchief than the infamous arts of a thouſand licentious men.—If you, therefore, wiſh to have your Eudocia remain uninfected, fly as ſoon as you receive this. Men, from being allowed to take greater liberties with their characters than women, (tho' he

certainly is the wiſeſt and the happieſt man who takes the feweſt) contract a freedom of carriage which makes their deſigns ſoon known, and conſequently puts the weaker ſex—if you will allow of that expreſſion—upon their guard againſt them: ſuch a ſoft and ſubtle diſſembler as Mrs. Minchin, not being ſuſpected of having any ill intentions, will be the more ſucceſsful in the execution of them—Beſides, after ſuch an *eclairciſement* as the *Ranelagh evening* produced, can it be ſuppoſed that my lady is ignorant of your attachment to the widow? an attachment which will be more publickly known if you do not break it off.

With regard to Sedley, you have now an excellent pretence to drive him out of your houſe, which you may not have bye and bye: only oblige him to come to honourable terms with Olivia; or tell him plainly, that his viſits will be highly improper, and I fancy you will get rid of him; you can but try, at leaſt: beſides, Olivia, from the friendſhip ſubſiſting between her and lady

Avon,

Avon, is intitled to your care about her peace and reputation. Olivia is a moſt amiable girl; and I heartily wiſh, for *her* ſake, as well as my own, that Sedley may ſhuffle off, for he will make the devil of a huſband.—Be ſpeedy, however, and may ſucceſs attend you.

LETTER XLV.

Lord AVON to Mr. MOUNTNEY.

THE firſt part of your advice, my dear friend, I dare not attempt to follow. With what face can I inſiſt upon my wife's going down to Devonſhire, &c.—when I know that ſhe hates the country; and when ſhe has it in her power to turn the tables upon me, by upbraiding me for ſeeking to deprive her of her innocent amuſements, while I take ſuch frequent opportunities to indulge myſelf in guilty ones?—No, Mountney; I cannot think of laying any reſtraint on a dear creature, who ſtill gives me the only joy I am capable of taſting.—I readily acknowledge the juſtneſs of what you ſay with regard to Mrs. Minchin; but would it be either reaſonable or kind to ſuppoſe her to be looſe and infamous, be-

cauſe

cauſe ſhe freely gives way to a paſſion for *me?*

You imagine that our affair is become public: I cannot be of *your* opinion; for ſurely my wife would never treat me with ſo much complacency, if ſhe knew my connexions with Mrs. Minchin, whom ſhe looks upon as her friend; and whom, for that very reaſon, I muſt endeavour to keep quiet. I do aſſure you, however, that I will, notwithſtanding, take the firſt opportunity to ſhake her off entirely.

As to Sedley, there is no ſtirring him.—I have talked to him *very* ſeriouſly about Olivia; and told him he muſt be ſenſible that his flirting with her could not but be highly diſadvantageous to her: adding, that unleſs he made proper propoſals to Mr. Heber, he muſt not be either ſurpriſed or offended, if I was poſitively determined no longer to ſee the friend of my wife, ſo amiable a girl too, affronted by a pretended attachment to her.

What anſwer do you think the rogue returned?

"I never was more ſerious ſince I was born, than in my addreſſes to Miſs Olivia Heber, and deſign to write to her father as ſoon as I can get her to determine abſolutely in my favour. *That* determination I have been all along waiting for."

As I could not believe a ſingle ſyllable of this reply, I told Olivia, the firſt time I ſaw her alone, what ſteps I had taken with Sir Charles; aſſuring her, that as I looked upon her under my protection, while ſhe was in *my* houſe; in conſequence of my Eudocia's friendſhip for her, and of the high opinion I had of her merit, I thought ſuch a proceeding quite neceſſary; hoping, at the ſame time, that ſhe approved of what I had done on *her* account.

Her face and neck were like ſcarlet while I was ſpeaking; and when I ſtopped, ſhe ſaid that ſhe was extremely obliged to me for the honour I had done her. She then,

then, with a low curtſy, left the room, to hide her emotions, I imagine; for ſhe trembled, and tears ruſhed into her eyes.—If Sedley ſhould be honeſt, at laſt, there will be no hopes for *you*.

LETTER

LETTER XLVI.

Sir CHARLES SEDLEY to Col. ACKWORTH.

I DON'T like the appearance of things juſt now.—Why ſhould Avon monopolize all the women who are tolerable?

I have been more and more enamoured with my lady ſince *that* delicious evening; and my lord ſeems more and more determined to keep me at a diſtance. Why, the devil, can't he be content with Mrs. Minchin, and the freedoms to which he has a right, as a huſband, with his lovely wife? why muſt he preſume to forbid my ſeeing Olivia, except I will come to the point? This behaviour is intolerable—I never was half ſo inclined to quarrel with a man in all my life, as I was with lord Avon, on this very ſubject: but inſtantly conſidering, that I muſt then expect to find his doors always ſhut to me; and that my lady,

lady, out of decency, could not well ſpeak to me in public, I bridled my anger, and promiſed to write to old Heber, as ſoon as I could get his daughter's conſent.—And faith, now 'tis come to the puſh, ſaid I to myſelf, I may as well marry the girl as not. —Tho' I hate marriage like the devil, 'tis probable I may not be able to avoid it all my life; and Olivia is, to be ſure, the right ſort of girl to make a wife of—Beſides, I ſhall then, of courſe, ſee my lady continually, and opportunities may offer in ſuch a ſituation, which I never could have hoped for in any other. As the huſband of her deareſt friend, I ſhall, undoubtedly, have ſome right to expect a ſhare of her confidence; and then my little Olivia, my own fond girl, will not have the power of concealing her friend's moſt ſecret thoughts from me.—I ſhall know, to a ſcruple, how well ſhe likes Avon; and when ſhe is in humour with him, and when not: as a wife muſt be a ſtrange animal indeed, who can ſuffer her huſband to paſs night after night with

with his miſtreſs, without wiſhing to make repriſals.

Having raiſed the moſt delicious expectations of watching the critical moment to catch her ladyſhip's virtue nodding, with my heart beating high with hope, I hurried to Olivia; and in the ſofteſt, prettieſt terms I could deviſe, declared my intention to demand her, in form, of her good father.

'Sdeath and furies!——The little gipſy abſolutely rejected me.

I was actually ſtruck all of a heap with amazement; and could not, for a conſiderable time, find words to aſk the meaning of ſo unaccountable a proceeding. Surely I am ſufficiently acquainted with women, not to be miſtaken in all the ſigns ſhe diſcovered of her wiſhes: not to mention the offer itſelf, which was too flattering to be refuſed by the daughter of a meer country gentleman, who could give her only a few paltry *hundreds*.

You can't think, George, what a confounded ſilly figure I made, when I firſt appeared upon this d—d honourable buſineſs:—But to be taken in by a little ruſtic, who has not been much above three months in town—Oh! how I curſed myſelf for an egregious coxcomb! — Baffled, however, as I was, I had no mind to let her ſlip quite thro' my fingers: and, tho' I felt ſomething like indifference all over me, which a good deal chilled the ardor of my approaches, I with much ado ſtammered out, "You really ſurprize me, madam, beyond meaſure, by this unexpected treatment."

My dainty gentlewoman replied,—(curſe her)—"I hope and believe I *do* ſurprize you, Sir Charles; as I ſhould be ſorry to have a man of *your* principles imagine, that he could marry me when he pleaſed."

My principles! — And pray how came the pretty moppet ſo well acquainted with my

my principles?—'Sdeath! that Mountney muſt have been prating.

I wiſhed him to come in that moment: I believe I ſhould have demanded ſatisfaction of him.—However, I ſtifled my paſſion as well as I could, and began to whine out ſomething about cruel diſappointment, miſrepreſentations, and ſuch ſtuff, hoping to melt her to my purpoſe, and to be even with my gentlewoman and her principles; when, to my utter confuſion, ſhe very calmly walked out of the room, leaving me to entertain myſelf with reflections on my firſt honourable overtures, which were not of the moſt agreeable kind.

Is not this a very extraordinary affair? who would have expected this tame pigeon, in appearance, to be ſo intolerable a flirt, ſo conſummate a jilt?—a meer country girl, bred nobody knows where—in Pool's-Hole—in the Peak.—The devil take her for me.—Theſe northern wenches would outwit old Lucifer himſelf—and yet what a ſoft, ſighing ſimpleton to look at! Accord-

ing to the Italian proverb, George, a woman and a melon are never to be known by their outſides.—But Olivia ſhall pay for her airs; aye, and her fine friend too—I expected *her* to be a tartar.—I own I am confoundedly bit *here*, to be outwitted by ſuch a meer doll.—She can have no ſenſations.

LETTER

LETTER XLVII.

Lady AVON to Miſs HEBER.

OLIVIA, my dear friend, not being in ſpirits, has deſired me to inform you, that ſhe has poſitively refuſed Sir Charles Sedley's requeſt, with regard to making propoſals to our good Mr. Heber. But tho' ſhe has acted with great diſcretion, I am but too much afraid, that her diſcretion will be attended with the moſt painful ſenſations. I hope, however, that a more intimate acquaintance with Sir Charles's character will reſtore that tranquility to her mind, which ſhe enjoyed before ſhe knew him. I am charmed, I confeſs, with the proper ſpirit ſhe has ſhewn upon this occaſion, in her behaviour to a man who has no idea of domeſtic happineſs: with ſuch a man what woman can be happy?

Don't

Don't you laugh at my ſentiments? I almoſt ſmile at them myſelf; and yet they are really my own, tho' ſo like thoſe which my lord entertained a little while ago, that they may be readily miſtaken for *his*.—And yet I have not the ſlighteſt reaſon to complain of any change in my lord's carriage to me: but I think that he can, as well as myſelf, find amuſement *from home*.

Olivia and I have had a little friendly debate. She was, at her firſt giving up Sir Charles, in a fit of deſpair, ready to ſet out for Derbyſhire;—but I, at length, made her ſenſible, that it will be infinitely more prudent for her to remain here, upon my account as well as her own:——Were ſhe to quit the town juſt now, would not Sir Charles moſt probably ſay, that tho' ſhe had refuſed him, ſhe was ſtill ſo much attached to him in her heart, as not to dare to truſt herſelf with the ſight of him? and would not the world, ever cenſorious, ever ſeeking for opportunities to traduce the moſt innocent,

nocent, throw out malicious hints, that her retreat, after ſhe had been ſo much ſeen in public with a man of his character, might be owing to the neceſſity of concealing the effects of an irregular correſpondence between them?—Let her, therefore, my dear Alicia, remain here, and triumph over this vain coxcomb, who has, I fear, triumphed over but too many of our ſilly ſex.—Beſides, what would Mountney do for her?—I am ſure he loves her; and time may, perhaps, make her ſenſible of his merit.

The dear good girl is not well—but be not anxious; every thing ſhall be done to reſtore the health and peace of my kindeſt friend:—She, with every thing elſe I ought to ſay to you from her, wiſhes to hear where Edmund is, and how you bear his abſence?

We are to go every day to Richmond for the benefit of the air, and ſometimes to ſleep there; as the phyſicians think our dear Olivia may be relieved by it.

LETTER

LETTER XLVIII.

Sir CHARLES SEDLEY to Col. ACKWORTH.

COURAGE! Once more I launch my bark upon the uncertain ocean. I have contracted an intimacy with the agreeable Mrs. Minchin, and find her to be a mighty neceſſary woman. She has, like a dear ingenious devil, thought of an expedient which muſt infallibly ſucceed—

"Ay, what's that?"

Only a new lover for lady Avon, my dear; that's all."

"How?—I thought you wanted to gain her for yourſelf."

Undoubtedly—But, I am not nice—you underſtand me: I ſhall be contented to be *ſecond*: when ſhe has once broken the ice, all difficulties will be over.

Moſt of the ſex love variety.

"Another and another after that."

And

And lady Avon is indiſputably fond of general admiration: yet, there muſt be a beginning.

Mrs. Minchin tells me, I am not the right ſort of man.

"You are too volatile, too negligent to win a woman ſo univerſally followed. The man who gains *her* muſt be a downright ſerious ſigher; he muſt be in earneſt."

"I ſwear, my dear widow, that I never was more earneſt, more ſerious in my life."

"But you are too indiſcriminate a lover: you flirt with all without diſtinction; and tho' many women like ſuch an agreeable careleſsneſs, this lady Avon expects ſomething more; and the moſt aſſiduous attention, the tendereſt ſolicitude will, in her opinion, be too little, unleſs the man appears to be actually dying for her. My lord, at my requeſt, related to me all that paſſed between him and his wife when ſhe was Miſs Tameworth; and therefore I am perfectly acquainted with her humour."

"And

"And where will ſhe find this expiring INAMORATO? for tho' every man admires her, few men have patience to hold out a long ſiege.

"Don't frighten yourſelf about the length of the ſiege; let the attack be ſufficiently warm, and I'll anſwer for the quickneſs of the capitulation."

Thus ended our dialogue.

I have within two days become intimate with lord Melville, juſt arrived from Italy. He is, you will allow, a compleat *Adonis*.—He was ſo charmed with her t'other night at the opera, that he could attend to nothing but her beauty; and I have promiſed to introduce him. He ſays, that he was very well acquainted with lord Avon before he left England; and may therefore, without any impropriety, make overtures towards the renewal of their intimacy; but is very deſirous of being ſpoken of in handſome terms to my lady.

It is, you know, Mrs. Minchin's intereſt to make lord Melville a favourite.—This

has a face; and I ſhall watch them pretty cloſely. He is young, ſtriking in his perſon, and has ſenſe—(A fine woman takes an infinite deal of pleaſure, you know, in making a man of underſtanding a fool.)—Beſides, he will manage matters better with Avon than I did: I was an honeſt, open-hearted raſcal, and let my friend ſee that I had a mind to his wife: but lord Melville is one of your ſpeculative men of pleaſure; he will, preſently, make her ſenſible that he takes notice of nothing but *her*; and yet will behave in ſuch a manner as to prevent his deſigns from being diſcovered, particularly by Avon, who, as he is uncommonly ſuſpicious, ought to have more eyes than ideas.

Now, I think, I ſhall be even with theſe two pretty friends; for the fall of Eudocia will ſo far affect Olivia, that ſhe won't, I'll bet any ſum, hold out long after her.

LETTER

LETTER XLIX.

Lady AVON to Miſs OLIVIA HEBER, at Richmond.

Groſvenor Square.

NOT being able to come down to you, according to my firſt intention when I left you yeſterday, but having a ſpare half hour, while I wait for lady Tameworth, and Mrs. Minchin, who are to call on me to go to Mrs. Counter's aſſembly, I had ſnatched up my pen to ſay fifty idle things, (out of which, if five happen to divert my dear Olivia, and hinder her from thinking too deeply, I ſhall be amply rewarded,) when lord Melville interrupted me;

"—— adorn'd with ev'ry art
"To warm and win the coldeſt heart;"

He ruſhed into the room, and, upon my word, made many ſoft ſpeeches, in no bad ſtyle; and yet ſaid nothing that amounted to the direct mention of what I neither ought to hear, nor am deſirous of hearing. I find, however, that I muſt keep him at a great diſtance.

"He comes too late who comes to be denied."

He was inſinuating beyond expreſſion; and tho' I am ſure I never can prefer any man to my dear lord Avon, notwithſtanding the whiſpers which have come to my ears about him, I don't like to be thus continually purſued by a man who is certainly too amiable to be ſuffered to be particular. I was diſguſted at Sedley's freedoms; but tho' he is infinitely a worſe man than lord Melville, his lordſhip is a far more dangerous one. Sedley, by flirting with every woman, makes himſelf of no conſequence to any;—but Melville only attaches himſelf

ſelf to me; and with ſo much artful deference that I don't like his behaviour.

I was ſorry to be alone with him, and ſat liſtening for lady Tameworth's coach; wiſhing every moment to hear it ſtop.

My lord finding himſelf diſregarded, ſaid, with a gentle ſigh, "May I venture to aſk you, madam, what ſo engroſſes your thoughts? When I firſt came in thoſe lovely features were gay with ſmiles, but they were ſuddenly overcaſt: Have I, charming lady Avon, (continued he, ſtealing his hand in mine) been ſo unfortunate as to ſay any thing to diſpleaſe you? If I have, I willingly ſubmit to the moſt rigorous puniſhment which you can inflict: I would forfeit my life rather than offend you."

So mighty ſoft a ſpeech merited, no doubt, in his opinion, as gentle a reply; but I almoſt threw him out of his play by anſwering, with the moſt unconcerned vivacity, "Indeed, my lord, ſo far was I from thinking about what you were ſaying,

that I did not ſo much as hear it, expecting every moment ſome friends to call for me in their coach."

A moſt expreſſive ſigh, accompanied with a very dying look, ſeemed to be the forerunners of a ſecond excellent ſpeech; ſo that I began to wiſh in good earneſt to get rid of him.—

Luckily, at that inſtant in came my lord; —in ſearch of Mrs. Minchin, I ſuppoſe.

He ſtarted at the ſight of Melville's attitude, who ſat leaning on the back of my chair; and, tho' I had withdrawn my hand twenty times, had juſt ſeized it again.

My ſuſpicious Harry changed colour: he looked abſolutely frighted.—He may love Mrs. Minchin, but I am ſure he loves *me* better: and while that is the caſe, I can neither be jealous of him, nor angry with him, tho' I ſaw plainly that he was fired both with jealouſy, and angry on ſeeing *me* ſo attended.

I, therefore, roſe from my ſeat, went up to him, and told him of my engage-

ment,

ment, of which he certainly knew as well I did; and aſked him if he was not to be of our party?

Surveying lord Melville, who had very politely ſpoken to him at his entrance, all over; and then looking at me, he ſaid; "I did not intend to go, but if you will ſtay till I am dreſt"—

He then rang the bell. Bingley came in, and he ordered his things to be got ready.

Ringing again, he countermanded them immediately.

In came Mr. Mountney. At the ſight of him he expreſſed the higheſt ſatisfaction; and yet, before he gave Mountney time to anſwer him, ſaid, "Will you ſtay here while I dreſs?"

"If you make haſte, poſſibly I may," replied he in his blunt manner.

"'Pſhaw, *poſſibly* won't do, ſaid my lord peeviſhly: you muſt promiſe to ſtay here with lady Avon till I come down."

Mountney aſſured him, with a ſmile, that he would.—He, therefore, left us at laſt, tho' viſibly much agitated on account of lord Melville.

Mountney told me, that his chief buſineſs was to ſee you.—He called you a noble girl; expreſſed a tender concern for your indiſpoſition; and aſked *my* permiſſion to ſee you at Richmond.

I ſhall bring him to you, Olly; he merits your eſteem—I was glad that my lord had prevailed on him to remain with me; but I ſaw that Melville was ſorry, tho' he treated Mountney with the moſt flattering regard.

At laſt, lady Tameworth came in without Mrs. Minchin, who had apologized for her abſence, by pleading a violent head-ach.

My lord made his appearance again, dreſſed ſtill more elegantly than Melville was, to whom my diſcreet aunt offered a corner in her coach.

My lord, who handed lady Tameworth, let her go to run after us, in order to

ſee

ſee that no improprieties paſſed between us.

Mountney ſhook his head at lord Avon, and aſked him if he would truſt *him* to wait on me to Richmond to-morrow. My lord, I know, can't be of our party *now*; for if he diſappoints Mrs. Minchin to-night, he muſt ſtay and make it up with her.

I ſat up after I came home to conclude this letter: becauſe I am to go to the new tragedy to-morrow.—I cannot, therefore, come to ſee you till the next day.

Take care of your health, my Olivia, and look kindly upon Mountney.

LETTER L.

Mr. MOUNTNEY to Lord AVON.

YOU are ſo everlaſtingly engaged *now*, that there is no finding a moment to ſpeak to you: I wiſhed to give you a little more advice on the night I found lord Melville at *your* houſe: I ſaw your diſturbance; but you only made yourſelf laughed at—You ſhould at once have ſecured Eudocia to yourſelf, by giving up a woman who has ſeduced *you*, and who is alſo trying to ſeduce *her*. I am aſſured, no matter how I came by my intelligence, that Mrs. Minchin, eager to keep you entirely to herſelf, has inſtigated lord Melville to endeavour to make lady Avon ſenſible that he has the tendereſt paſſion for her; which paſſion is diſcoverable in the ſtrongeſt manner, by every look and geſture: he adores, he doats on her, I know he does; and yet

he

he will try never to offend her. Such a man, if any perſon beſides yourſelf can, is the moſt likely to touch her heart.—You may fancy, perhaps, that ſhe is too lively and volatile; but ſhe has, nevertheleſs, a heart naturally tender and compaſſionating. —Leave Mrs. Minchin, therefore, for ever: my lady's heart is firmly your's at preſent; and you may keep it if you will ſupply the place of this amiable man,—but not more amiable than *you* are.—Again, I ſay, take my lady down to Devonſhire: Richmond is too near London.—Take notice, Avon, I give advice directly contrary to my own intereſt; for you muſt take Olivie with you.

The dear, gentle, ſuffering girl received me with bluſhes, which convinced me how much ſhe has felt for Sedley. She is exceedingly altered.—She put me in mind of Shakeſpeare's VIOLA, who ſat

——————like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief.

Mild and tender, however, as her diſpoſition is, ſhe will never, I fear, be brought to any thing but a bare *endurance* of me.—But I think more about your affairs than my own. — Prithee don't feel reluctance, any longer, at parting with a woman, who deſerves not even your pity, much leſs your love.—Reſolve, like a man, never to ſee her again.

LETTER

LETTER LI.

Miſs HEBER to Miſs OLIVIA HEBER.

HOW ſincerely I congratulate you, my dear Olivia, upon the conqueſt you have gained over your inclination, which, by what I have heard from our dear lady Avon and yourſelf, could never have been indulged without the higheſt indiſcretion! Yet how can I ſit on judgment on others, when my own conduct wants an apology. —Why am I ſo exceedingly anxious about a man, who, tho' very amiable, may never have it in his power to make propoſals to me to which I ought to liſten, ſuppoſing him deſirous of making the moſt eligible ones?

He has been for ſome time perpetually with me; but, a few days ago, he informed me that his father was going to ſend him to ſtay with *the friend* with whom he had

had lately been on a viſit, one of the moſt agreeable men in the world. "I ſhould feel an uncommon pleaſure in being with him, continued he, if I could enjoy his company without being ſeparated from my Alicia."

My face glowed: I hung my head. Reflecting that I was going to loſe him, perhaps, for ever, my heart was filled with ſorrow, and my eyes with tears.

He ſaw my confuſion and my diſtreſs, and taking my hand, which he gently preſſed, ſaid, "Do not be uneaſy, my dear Miſs Heber: I will never, a ſingle moment, forget the regard you have ſhewn for me; and will dare to hope, if you forbid me not to hope, that no happier man ſhall uſurp the place which I hold, I flatter myſelf, in that dear friendly boſom.—I will not, however, take leave of you till the laſt inſtant.—Be comforted; and be aſſured, that my gratitude will never ſuffer me to be unmindful of you."

He

He left me in tears: and when he came to take his laſt adieu, they flowed ſo faſt, that I could not ſpeak to him.

He claſped me in his arms; he kiſſed me tenderly — he never had taken that liberty before — and was, apparently, full as much concerned as myſelf.

"Dear Alicia!" cried he, "how it afflicts me to leave you thus! Were I not under controul, I would ſtay with you for ever."

I was only capable of making a reply with a modeſt preſſure of his hand, while my looks muſt have ſufficiently acquainted him with every emotion of my too tender heart.

I comfort myſelf chiefly, in his abſence, by talking of him to my father, by ſtrolling to the walks he loved, and ſitting on the bench on which I have ſpent ſo many pleaſing hours by his ſide.——But how fooliſh is it, in this manner, to cheriſh an inclination, the indulgence of which can only make me wretched!

My

My father has received an offer for me, which he thinks a very advantageous one, and which very few girls in my ſituation would refuſe.—My new lover is a young man of faſhion. His uncle applied to my father by letter; and my father has aſſured me, that the gentleman, whom he has ſeen, is quite as agreeable as Edmund.—He may be ſo: I wiſh I could ſee with my father's eyes, if, by ſeeing like him, I could make him happier. But were this ſo highly-commended lover even handſomer, more amiable, and richer than he is—ſtill—ſtill—he is not Edmund.

My father, however, is very good; he only laughed at my peremptory refuſal, told me I was a ſimpleton, and added that I ſhould repent of what I had done. But, certainly, next to marrying the man you like, the only ſatisfaction is not to be obliged to marry any body who is your averſion. Is not my dear Olivia of this opinion?

I approve of our dear friend's reaſons for keeping you near her; but can't help wiſhing, that this place had been fixed upon as the propereſt to promote your recovery: How particularly ſuitable ſhould we *now* be to each other! Yet, on ſecond thoughts, the ſolitude of the country, perhaps, added to the melancholy ſociety of a ſiſter, whoſe heart is ſtill more deeply engaged than your own, might only ſerve to make you think the oftener on the man, whom you wiſh totally to forget.—To forget thoſe whom we love is—I know by experience—a painful taſk indeed!

LETTER

LETTER LII.

Lord MELVILLE to Mrs. MINCHIN.

YOU have put me upon too hard a ſervice, madam.—To *pretend* a paſſion only for lady Avon is impoſſible; I feel it all over me — every nerve trembles at the ſight of her, even at a diſtance: but when I, either by accident or deſign, approach near enough to touch her, no words can deſcribe the emotions of my ſoul. She is really the moſt lovely woman I ever beheld; and, as I firmly believe her to be as good as ſhe is beautiful, how can I venture even to think of injuring ſuch an angel, or of endeavouring to inſpire her with a paſſion which muſt make her injure both herſelf and my lord, who is a very amiable man, and whom I am ſure ſhe loves. Had you but ſeen her laſt night, on his coming home unexpected; had you ſeen her eyes ſparkling

ling with pleaſure at his entrance, you would have been ſenſible, that it will be no eaſy matter for me to gain her from him, ſuppoſing I was ſo loſt to honour, as to attempt ſuch a conqueſt.

Upon my declaring my admiration of this charming woman, you told me that ſhe had a huſband undeſerving of her, and wiſhed that I would feign a paſſion for her, in order to make him return to his duty.—I felt myſelf but too ſtrongly inclined to comply with your deſire: but my compliance has deſtroyed my peace.—She proves to be a woman, not only ſuperior to any of her ſex with whom I have ever converſed, but, to my everlaſting diſquiet, the only woman who can make me happy. She has fired me with love, but ſhe has alſo filled me with a kind of veneration for her, which no other woman ever excited in me. That delightful vivacity, which her envious rivals, the conceited coxcombs who flutter round her, or the adoring huſband, (who, knowing the value of the treaſure he poſ-

ſeſſes,

ſeſſes, trembles leſt another ſhould deprive him of it) call levity or coquetry, is nothing but the innocent tranſport of a heart replete with virtuous ſenſations.—Would to Heaven I had never known her! it being impoſſible for me, at preſent, to ſubdue a paſſion, which, as it can never be returned, muſt be the torment of my life.—I ſhall, therefore, ſoon give up the ſatisfaction I now enjoy of being near her, to enſure my future tranquility.

With my moſt grateful acknowledgments to Mrs. Minchin, for having procured me ſo delightful, but, at the ſame time, ſo dangerous an acquaintance,

I am

her very obedient,

humble ſervant,

MELVILLE.

LETTER

LETTER LIII.

Lady AVON to Miſs OLIVIA HEBER.

I AM very ſorry, my dear friend, to find that neither your health nor your inclination would permit you to leave Richmond the day before yeſterday, and come with me to town: yet, as you received no injury from going to the play the other evening, you might have, methinks, ventured again. Your company is quite neceſſary to me now; for I muſt be either with Mrs. Minchin or lord Melville, or both; and they are both, you know, improper as well as diſagreeable people to be about me.—The former, by ſome indiſcretions diſcovered in my lord's preſence, has left me no room to entertain a doubt concerning their intimacy; but I don't chuſe to take any notice of it, being fearful of diſpleaſing my lord. I would not, willingly, diſguſt him,

him, Olivia: he ſtill loves me; and he will, poſſibly, in time, become tired of Mrs. Minchin, with the freedom of whoſe behaviour he is, I ſee pretty plainly, offended; and he, I believe, ſincerely wiſhes that I was not a witneſs to it. If you were here, Olly, ſhe might, perhaps, be more reſerved. She looks upon *you* as a veſtal.—Now, why muſt people ſuppoſe that a married woman ſhould be leſs modeſt than a maid? If I was a man, I ſhould prefer a woman who was the moſt *decent* in her carriage, and all men of ſenſe do ſo.

I am certain that my lord, at this time, would like Mrs. Minchin better if ſhe was more reſerved, eſpecially before *me*. But this is not all which diſturbs me: ſhe is perpetually crying up lord Melville, and as perpetually making him of our parties. She has even had the addreſs, I think, to make lord Avon, who was, at firſt, not leſs ſuſpicious of him than of other people, quite eaſy and ſatisfied with his being continually

tinually with me, and frequently with me alone.

Melville indeed is at preſent only mighty ſoft and civil: he is, undoubtedly, a man of ſenſe and converſation; but ſtill a third perſon would make our ſociety more agreeable to me, and leſs cenſurable. Come, then, my dear, to town, or I muſt e'en immure myſelf with *you* at Richmond.

Mountney has called on us, and wiſhes to ſee you. He adviſes me to make a reſolution to ſtay at Richmond: but then I ſhall have Mrs. Minchin for a conſtant viſiter, as ſhe will not leave my lord, who has no mind to leave *me*; Melville, too, will pretend to come after *her*; and they are certainly more bearable for a few hours in a day, than they would be if ſhut up in a houſe with one. Let me prevail on you, therefore, to come, if your health will permit, to Groſvenor-ſquare.

LETTER

LETTER LIV.

Lord AVON to Mr. MOUNTNEY.

MY conſcience reproaches me but too ſeverely with my fatal connexion with Harriot, to ſuffer me to make the leaſt reſiſtance to my Eudocia's inclinations, which keep her, I know, at this very moment in London, tho' her dear Olivia is confined at Richmond for the benefit of the air, and wiſhes for her ſociety.

As to Melville, I believe he admires my wife,—every man muſt admire her—I ſhould indeed be more pleaſed if he was not ſo eternally at her elbow: Mrs. Minchin, however, aſſures me, and ſhe is too firmly mine to deceive me, that he is a very diſcreet young fellow, and may be truſted. I never obſerved him, 'tis true, to be in the leaſt diſpoſed to attempt ſuch monſtrous freedoms as Sedley has taken:

nor

nor do I, tho' I think Eudocia virtuous, imagine that ſhe likes him a quarter ſo well; conſequently there is leſs danger.

As to breaking off with Mrs. Minchin, I have endeavoured to do it twenty times.—I am thoroughly convinced of my wife's infinite ſuperiority; but there is ſuch a melting tenderneſs in Harriot, whenever ſhe has the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion of my deſigning to quit her, that it diſtreſſes me beyond all endurance. She loves me with an ardor ſo intenſe, ſo extravagant, that ſhe can hardly keep her paſſion within bounds; and I have, actually, been more than once terrified leſt my dear Eudocia ſhould gueſs ſomething of which ſhe is certainly ignorant, as ſhe could not poſſibly be ſo calm, unleſs ſhe has quite ceaſed to love me.—There is no viſible alteration in her carriage, ſhe is neither more nor leſs fond of me. While I was diſtracted on my firſt intimacy with Harriot, ſhe, indeed, from pity, diſcovered more than common affection; but there is now no-

thing particular in her behaviour to me one way or the other.—Had I been able to raiſe the paſſion of jealouſy in her heart, ſhe muſt have given ſome proofs of it ere now: but I fear ſhe will ever be inſenſible, at leaſt to me. Could ſhe but doat like Harriot!—— What an ecſtatic thought!

LETTER

LETTER LV.

Lady AVON to Miſs OLIVIA HEBER.

I SHALL be with you the day after to-morrow, my dear, as ſoon as I have prepared every thing for leaving town.—I will ſtay no longer here. When we meet we will contrive ſome method to keep Mrs. Minchin, if poſſible, from abſolutely living with us: and if we cannot carry our point without diſpleaſing my lord, we will go down at once to Derbyſhire, to which journey he will not, now, I believe, make any oppoſition.

As to lord Melville, he will not, I imagine, at preſent venture to pay many viſits at Richmond; as there has been an *eclairciſſement* relating to him, the particulars of which you ſhall hear when we meet.

Mountney has teazed me to death to leave London before; but I had my rea-

ſons for ſtaying ſo long, tho' I did not think proper to communicate them to *him*.

Shall I own to you, Olivia, that I cannot bear the thoughts of Richmond, while my lord is here; and I am apprehenſive that, tho' he ſtill loves me, Mrs. Minchin will either get him from me to town, or come to Richmond after him.

As you will ſee me ſo ſoon, I ſhall make no apology for the ſhortneſs of this.

LETTER

LETTER LVI.

Lord MELVILLE to Mrs. MINCHIN.

'TIS all over with me. I have ſpoken, and I am undone. I flattered myſelf, in vain, that I could ſee her without increaſing a paſſion which grew too violent to be concealed.

I have already told you, that I would ceaſe going to a houſe in which I ſhould be in ſo dangerous a ſituation; but I had not power to keep off. Had I, indeed, withdrawn myſelf entirely from lord Avon's, I muſt neceſſarily have met with his charming wife at every public place. Yet, I believe, I ſhould not have riſqued the giving her offence, had not fortune laſt night laid a ſtrong temptation before me.

We were both at *Soho*, but in different parties—I could not help preſenting myſelf

to take care of her out—The horſes, being frighted at ſomething, ran away with the coach: I ran ſwiftly after it, in order to ſtop them, and was happy enough to accompliſh my deſign, tho' ſeveral people about me were unſucceſsful in their attempts. My lady, however, being very much alarmed, I could not think of letting her go home by herſelf, as I knew that the lady, who was with her, was to be ſet down in George-ſtreet, Hanover-ſquare.—I therefore, almoſt without aſking her leave, ſtepped into the coach to them: but, having been ſhocked leſt lady Avon's fright ſhould be attended with diſagreeable conſequences, I did not, till juſt before we ſtopped in George-ſtreet, endeavour to make her ſenſible, that I thought it very unſafe for her to go home by herſelf.

She made no anſwer.

When I had conducted her into her own houſe, ſhe looked ſo pale that I was affected beyond expreſſion; tho' I believe I appeared

peared ſtill more diſordered myſelf. I was, indeed, in ſuch an agitation concerning her health, that I ſcarce knew either what I ſaid or did.

On her firſt coming in, I inſiſted upon her taking ſome drops, and fain would have perſuaded her to ſuffer a ſurgeon to be fetched, to bleed her.

She abſolutely perſiſted in refuſing me; but her refuſal was accompanied with a heavenly ſmile, which ſeemed to compaſſionate me for my reſtleſs anxiety.

I could hold out no longer.

Seizing her lovely hand, I preſſed it in mine: I even dared to advance it to my lips; begging her, at the ſame time, to tell me how ſhe found herſelf, and to excuſe the wildneſs, the diſtraction of my behaviour, which my exceſſive terrors on her account had occaſioned.

She withdrew her hand inſtantly; and darted a look at me, which not only reprimanded me ſeverely for my preſumption,

but made me tremble leſt I had committed an offence never to be pardoned. I was almoſt petrified by her awful yet alluring frowns.

At firſt I thought of leaving her immediately, after having deſired her permiſſion to come the next day to ſee how ſhe did; but the dread of being denied ſo tranſporting a ſatisfaction kept me in a moſt perplexed and wavering ſtate.

At laſt, no longer able to endure either her coolneſs and indifference, or my own diſquieting ſenſations, I threw myſelf at her feet, and beſought her with the tendereſt, the moſt pathetic earneſtneſs, to pardon me for every thing I had ſaid or done, aſſuring her that I would never offend again—and adding, that I ſhould not then have diſcovered the paſſion which I had felt for her from my firſt acquaintance with her, had not my terrors about her ſafety made me involuntarily give a vent to emotions I had not power to controul.

" For-

"Forgive but this firſt offence, madam, concluded I; and I ſolemnly ſwear that you ſhall never have reaſon to be diſpleaſed with me."

I was ſilent—but I lifted up my ſupplicating eyes to her dear inchanting face, waiting for her anſwer.

Riſing immediately, ſhe, with a voice and look which rooted me to the floor, ſaid, "I had hoped, Sir, that my being the wife of lord Avon would have ſecured me from the hearing of ſuch very improper declarations; as I am perfectly aſſured, that I never, intentionally, gave any man room to imagine that I could be brought to liſten to them. Leave this houſe, therefore, inſtantly, my lord: you have more than repaid yourſelf for the ſervice you have done me, by taking a liberty which no man, but yourſelf, ever attempted."

With theſe chilling words ſhe left the room abruptly, before I could recover myſelf.

ſelf enough to reply. I was, indeed, ſo ſhocked at her anger, while I allowed it to be juſt, that I was ſcarce able to riſe from the attitude I was in.

At that inſtant my lord entered the room.

He ſeemed to be much ſurpriſed, and not at all pleaſed, to find me in his houſe at ſo late an hour.

As ſoon as I could articulate, I acquainted him with the affair that had brought me to the ſpot on which he ſaw me.

He returned no anſwer, but flew up ſtairs after my lady; and I, aſtoniſhed at a carriage ſo deſtitute of politeneſs, but which was nothing compared to what had happened, hurried out of a houſe in which I had ſuffered ſo much uneaſineſs.

Not daring to appear before lady Avon again, yet ſtill deſirous, beyond expreſſion, to know if ſhe had received no harm from her fright, I ſent as ſoon as I thought ſhe might be awake.

The

The porter anſwered, without ſending my compliments up ſtairs, that my lady was very well.

I ſend you this, madam, that you may intercede for me when you ſee my lady, as I cannot venture to appear myſelf. Tell her, my dear Mrs. Minchin, that when I offended her, I offended her involuntarily, at an unguarded moment, when I was abandoned to deſpair at her ſituation, which for ever debarred me even of the moſt diſtant hopes; and when I was trembling with a thouſand fears for her ſafety: overpowered by thoſe fears, I was too much affected to behave with that reſpectful deference, which her diſcretion had ever exacted from me; and the failure, of which I have been guilty, will for ever deſtroy my peace, unleſs ſhe can be prevailed on, by being aſſured that it was not an intentional one, and would never be repeated, to condeſcend to forgive me.—Say this, my good friend; ſay any thing elſe that you

think more proper, or more likely to move this angel of a woman to relent and to pardon; and you will eternally oblige

your ever obedient,

MELVILLE.

LETTER

LETTER LVII.

Miſs HEBER to Miſs OLIVIA HEBER.

WHAT intelligence have I to ſend you, my dear ſiſter! It will ſurprize you, I dare ſay; for I myſelf could hardly, for ſome time, believe the reality of it.

I told you in my laſt of an offer which my father had received for me, and which I could no way bring myſelf to accept of; tho' he very much preſſed me to the acceptance of it, and painted the young gentleman in the moſt advantageous colours: but, after Edmund, he had no chance, with all his accompliſhments, for my conſent.

At laſt, my father, ſeemingly tired with my repeated refuſals, ſaid to me, one morning, at breakfaſt, "Well, girl; ſince you

you ſtill perſiſt in oppoſing me, we will ſee what you will ſay to your friend Edmund, who is quite intimate with this lover of your's; and who, at his requeſt, is coming to ſee what *he* can do with you."

At the ſudden mention of the dear youth who engroſſed all my thoughts, and for whom indeed I had rejected all the offers made to me, whom I had wiſhed to ſee, but whoſe return I had not ventured to expect ſo ſoon, my face was in a glow—my fingers trembled to ſuch a degree, that I was obliged to ſet down my cup—tears ſtarted into my eyes, and I eagerly ſaid, without conſidering to whom I ſpoke, "Can Edmund then deſire to perſuade me to be miſerable? can he, who wiſhed that no happier man might uſurp his place in my heart; can he—ought he to plead for his friend?"

"How?" interrupted my father, "have you then engaged yourſelf to Edmund, without *my* conſent, and kept your engagement all this while from my knowledge?"

"No,

"No, indeed, my dear Sir," ſaid I, weeping; "he never made any propoſal, he never declared any thing but friendſhip."

"Friendſhip!" replied my father; "the girl's a fool to talk ſuch nonſenſe—Indeed Alcey, I thought you had been wiſer than not to know, that when young men propoſe themſelves as friends, they always mean ſomething more than friendſhip."—Then—as if recollecting himſelf—"However, added he, I charge you, as you value my affection, to conſent to marry the friend of Edmund, and don't let your head run upon impoſſibilities."

You can't think, my dear ſiſter, how I was ſurprized and confounded at what my father told me.—The more I endeavoured to diſcover the meaning of a behaviour which I thought ſo unaccountable both in him and young Haſtings, the more I was puzzled to find it out. I grew very impatient, however, to ſee the latter; not doubting but that he would give me im-

[illegible] the information which I ſo earneſtly wiſhed for: Yet I was ſtill more firmly reſolved than ever not to marry; as I found that, notwithſtanding Edmund's readineſs to give me up to his friend, he poſſeſſed my heart, and that I could not think of ever having any other man have the leaſt ſhare of it.

He arrived in about an hour.

Inſtead of flying, in order to run to him, as I had a few days before done to my chamber, I ſat motionleſs with my handkerchief up to my eyes.

He flew to me; and with a look and voice expreſſive of tenderneſs and ſurprize, cried, "Am I then miſtaken in you, my dear Alicia? and have I reckoned too much upon your eſteem, by expecting to be received by you as a lover, as the man who wiſhed to be your's for ever, and who could not help believing that you would ſee him, at leaſt, with ſatisfaction, and not behold him with tears?"

"I do,

" I do not underſtand you, Edmund," ſaid I, with a feeble and faultering voice, ſo violent was the tremor all over me; " you talk of *one* thing, and my father of *another*. He told me that you was coming to recommend a friend of your's to me,—and I aſſure you, at once, I cannot marry him—indeed I cannot."

I could not go on: ſighs and ſobs quite hindered me from ſpeaking.

" Be compoſed, my dear Alicia," ſaid he; " tho' I cannot be ſo if you ſtill reject me.—I have no friend to recommend but myſelf—I always eſteemed you highly, and ſince the affecting pity which you diſcovered for me when I loſt all hopes of Eudocia, my heart fondly told me, that you were not altogether indifferent about me. I would, at that time, have declared my ſentiments, but I was not my own maſter; and my uncle, to whom I am indebted for my education—(for he is not my father) told me that I had a father who would one day own me; adding, that till *he* made his

ap-

appearance I muſt not offer to diſpoſe of myſelf. I obeyed, tho' with reluctance, becauſe I earneſtly wiſhed to tell you what would, I could not help believing, give you pleaſure. Our parting, you may remember, was affecting, which made me the more ready to imagine that you were not averſe to me; and I left you with uncommon regret, extremely unwilling to quit a houſe in which I had always been received with particular ſatisfaction. You may remember too, Alicia, that I wiſhed you not to be prepoſſeſſed in favour of any other man—I dared not to ſay any more. —The friend whom I went to viſit proved to be my father, Sir Edmund Haſtings: he had till then taken the name of Thompſon, being afraid to own his marriage, tho' my mother had been dead ſome years, while his father lived, as there had been differences between the two families, which never could be accommodated. My uncle (who was acquainted with my father's private marriage) loſing his only ſon, an infant,

fant, generouſly offered to bring me up as his own child, eſpecially as he could do ſo without occaſioning any ſuſpicions, having been for ſome years ſettled in in this part of the country, at a conſiderable diſtance from my grandfather's habitation. In ſuch a ſituation he could the better carry on ſo honeſt an impoſition—to uſe my father's words—and give me a good chance for the poſſeſſion of two family-eſtates inſtead of one, as he determined to make me *his* heir, in whatever manner my grandfather ſhould be provoked to act, on diſcovering what had been ſo ſtudiouſly concealed from him. —As my worthy uncle always treated me like his ſon, I loved him and revered him as my father: but whenever I ſpoke of Eudocia or you in terms of admiration, he told me that it was time enough for me to think of engaging myſelf.—I never made any reply to ſuch anſwers till juſt before I left you laſt: I then mentioned you in a manner which ſhewed how ſincerely I loved you; but I was commanded to be ſilent till

I re-

I returned from Mr. Thompſon's.—With *that* name my father came down to a little houſe about twenty miles off, to which I often went to viſit him, as the neareſt and deareſt friend of him who is now my uncle. —The laſt time I found him in deep mourning. He received me with greater affection than ever. — Immediately obſerving that I was not ſo chearful as uſual, he aſked me the cauſe of the alteration in my appearance; and aſked me in a way which would not permit me to conceal my uneaſineſs from him, if I had intended to hide it. —I told him the cauſe of it at once, thinking to make him a ſerviceable friend in the management of an affair which I had ſo much at heart.——He, in return, cried, "Let me firſt, my deareſt Edmund, inform you how very near, as well as dear, you are to me; and then tell me, if you think I can refuſe you any thing you can aſk, which may reaſonably be granted by me."—After a diſcovery, too affecting to be particularly related to my Alicia, while

ſhe

ſhe is ſo depreſſed, I opened my whole heart to the moſt affectionate of fathers, who kindly told me, that he had been rendered too unhappy from an oppoſition to his own wiſhes, ever to make *me* miſerable by thwarting mine; adding, that if the lady loved me as much as I did her, he would demand her of her father for me.—He did ſo; and I ſuppoſe, by what you tell me, this was a concerted ſcheme between our parents, to try how far I was agreeable to my dear Alicia; as my father, when he permitted me to leave him, bade me go and ſee my miſtreſs, and return to him again when *ſhe* could ſpare me. — And now, Alicia, will you — can you (added the dear youth with an anxious tenderneſs) ſend me back unhappy?"

The ſtrongeſt words will but poorly deſcribe what I felt, my ſiſter, during my amiable Edmund's recital; but the concluſion of it took from me all power of ſpeech; and I ſhould have fallen ſenſeleſs on the floor, had not he caught me in his arms.

When

When I recovered, I could only by looks and ſighs let him know to what a degree I was made happy by this proof of his love.

In a few days, Sir Edmund and Mr. Haſtings, ſenior, came to ſee me, and both joined with my father in laughing at the fuſs into which they had thrown me. Sir Edmund declared that the ſcheme was *his*, to try the ſtrength of my affection for his ſon; as he ſhould have been much concerned, he ſaid, to have had his boy diſpoſe of his heart, without receiving one in return.

I have hardly left room, my dear Olivia, to deſire you to come down to us as ſoon as you can.—You may be aſſured, that no perſon can be ſo agreeable and ſo proper a companion for me at the approaching ceremony, as my ſiſter: our dear Doſſy will not, I dare ſay, refuſe to part with you upon ſo intereſting an occaſion. Beſides, change of air may be of great ſervice to you, and your native air is the moſt likely, I think, to be ſalutary.

My

My dear Edmund joins with my father and myſelf in begging you to come with all convenient expedition.

I need not deſire you to communicate the contents of this to lady Avon; whoſe letter I will anſwer the very firſt opportunity.

LETTER

LETTER LVIII.

Sir CHARLES SEDLEY to Col. ACKWORTH.

THIS uncommon woman, this lady Avon, riſes ſuperior to all my evil machinations againſt her. I almoſt begin to deſpair of her; that is, of making her what I wiſh her to be; and have been, more than once, tempted to give her up—yet I muſt *then* quite loſe my revenge both on *her* and Olivia.—That's hard—curſed hard—I don't expect, now, to conquer lady Avon; but to be refuſed by that little ſimple ruſtic, as I took her to be, that mere country girl—'Sdeath! how it galls me!—This Melville will never make any thing of it—We employed him only to counterfeit a paſſion, and he fell downright in love.—He has declared his ſentiments, and ruined himſelf, as he ſays in a letter to Mrs. Minchin, full of the falſe ſublime; and let me periſh

periſh if I would play ſo fooliſh a part for any woman under the ſun: theſe fellows, with their whining nonſenſe, are always treated like puppies as they are. When a man once begins to be frightened at the ſight of the woman he loves, 'tis all over with him.—Reſpect!—ſubmiſſion!—deference!—ridiculous ſtuff!—they only make a woman hold up her head higher than ſhe did before.——No—no—ever keep them down, if you wiſh to be well with them.

What would I now give to ſee this haughty lady Avon, proud to a degree beyond expreſſion,—only becauſe ſhe is virtuous, I ſuppoſe;—what would I not give to ſee her humbled?—But to be the cauſe of her humiliation, would be to triumph indeed.—

I have ſtarted a ſcheme. I am determined to come to the point with her. On one of the nights, when Avon ſtays late at Mrs. Minchin's, I will, ſomehow, contrive to get a ſight, at leaſt, of his wife in her

moſt retired hours. If ſhe will not, after all that I ſhall ſay to her; if ſhe will not hear me, if ſhe will not ſpeak to me, why —I ſhall have the pleaſure of ſeeing a fine woman go to bed—that's all.

LETTER

LETTER LIX.

Lady AVON to Miſs OLIVIA HEBER.

COME to me, my dear Olivia, as ſoon as poſſible after the receipt of this.—Come to me—I never wanted you ſo much. And to convince you of the neceſſity of your preſence at this time, let me tell you why you receive ſo earneſt an invitation from me, that you may have no excuſe left.

Laſt night, my dear, I made ſeveral viſits: having met with few people at home, I called in at Sir William's. I found my lady engaged with a private party at quadrille, and therefore, after a ſhort ſtay, I took my leave.—I ſat down to ſupper by myſelf.—My lord, on hearing that I deſigned to make viſits, and finiſh the evening at my uncle's, went to the *uſual place.*

As ſoon as I had ſupped, I went up to my dreſſing-room, and rang for Loyd.—

Happening not to be at all ſleepy, I had no mind to go to bed. However I undreſſed me; and after having chatted for ſome time with Loyd, for want of better company, ſent her away, telling her, that I would ring for her when I was ready to go to bed.

I took up a book and began to read.

In a ſhort time I heard a rap, and in a moment my lord came up ſtairs.

I was ſo pleaſed with him for coming home ſo much earlier than uſual, ſo much ſooner than I had expected him, that I ran to him to tell him how glad I was to ſee him, as I really wanted a little chat, having met with not one converſible creature during his abſence from me. At *my* requeſt, therefore, inſtead of leaving me to call Loyd, he ſat down by me.

A noiſe, which we heard in the cloſet between the dreſſing-room and chamber, alarmed him: he roſe immediately to go and ſee if any body was there: I, who was eagerly telling him ſomething, cried, "Nobody

body but Loyd."—But he *would* go—(taking up the candle.)

In a moment almoſt I heard him ſay, "Villain, what buſineſs have you here?"

"Not ſo much a villain as yourſelf, my lord," was the reply; "as I have not ſo lovely a wife at home, to condemn me for the hours which I ſpend with my miſtreſs."

I heard no more; but, running to the cloſet, ſaw Sedley and my lord both with their ſwords drawn.

I ſeized my lord, called to Sir Charles not to hurt him, and cried aloud for help. My fears, however, becoming too powerful for me, I fainted away.

On opening my eyes, I found myſelf in the arms of lord Melville. Lord Avon, ſtanding by, looked at me with a kind of ſullen gloom.—Sir Charles lay bleeding on the floor—all our ſervants were aſſembled round us.

For *my* part, I felt an inſtantaneous ſenſation of joy at the ſight of my lord alive. Haſtily diſengaging myſelf from Melville,

and advancing to my dear Harry, I ſaid eagerly, "Thank Heaven! you are not hurt."

"Not hurt?" replied he—"Oh! deeply, deeply—*My* peace and *your* reputation are deſtroyed — but this is not a time for talking—You have undone us both for ever —yet ſurely *one* man at a time was enough! —Oh! woman, woman!" continued he, throwing himſelf into a chair.

I was now as much aſtoniſhed as I had been frighted.

Melville, who had been looking at Sir Charles, ſaid to lord Avon, "There is no time to be loſt, my lord: I fear he is dead: you have nothing to do but to eſcape directly: I will take the ſame care of my lady as you would yourſelf."

"No doubt, Sir," replied lord Avon, (with an indifference which at once amazed and pained me) "but as much as I deſpiſe her for making ſuch a dupe of me, I ſhall not leave her under *your* protection."

"Send

"Send for her relations and friends, then," ſaid lord Melville, "and I will quit your houſe directly: but, tho' you ſuſpect me very unjuſtly, for your innocent, your injured lady's ſake, have ſome regard to your own preſervation: a ſurgeon muſt come to Sir Charles; let me prevail on you to go off firſt."

"Do, do, my dear Harry," ſaid I, with my eyes full of tears: "I will go with you."

"Fetch Mountney immediately, and a ſurgeon," was all his reply.

When lord Melville, after having again offered his aſſiſtance to us both, had left us, I aſked my lord how all this happened, and why he looked ſo diſcontented at me.

"Can you poſſibly aſk?" replied he, with a tremulous voice; "has not my life been endangered on *your* account? one would have thought that a ſingle lover at a time was ſufficient, but two at once—Oh! Eudocia!"

" By all that's good, my lord," ſaid I, " I was as ignorant of their being here as you was: but if you have really killed Sir Charles, do not ſtay here; let us away immediately? you will bye and bye be convinced that I am more to be pitied than blamed."

During my endeavours to remove my lord's ſuſpicions, Bingley, who had been trying to ſtop the blood ſtreaming from Sir Charles's ſide, advanced, and with all the humility and reſpect becoming a man in his ſtation, yet with all the honeſt warmth of an old ſervant who had a real regard for his maſter, intreated my lord not to riſque his ſafety by ſtaying any longer.

" And what ſignifies my ſafety?" replied he fiercely, " when ſhe whom I love more than life has deceived me."

" Never, my lord," cried I.

At that moment Mr. Mountney entered the room.

Aſtoniſhed at the dreadful ſcene before him, he, however, quickly comprehended the

the meaning of it; and, on the ſurgeon's being upon the ſtairs, he hurried my lord and me into another room.

On my lord's owning that he had killed Sedley, with whom he believed I had an appointment, and had put him into the cloſet, as he came home ſooner than uſual, Mountney looked at me, and then ſo ſtrenuouſly inſiſted upon my lord's ſetting off, that moment, for France, that he no longer refuſed.

I then interpoſed, and aſſured Mr. Mountney that I was perfectly innocent, deſiring to go with my lord.

"You cannot go with him," ſaid he, "becauſe you cannot travel poſt; but you ſhall go after him when you are able. At preſent compoſe yourſelf as well as you can: I will juſt ſee my lord ſafe on his way, and return to you, and conduct you to Sir William Tameworth's."

Having ſo ſpoken, he looked at my lord as if for his approbation, who, however, made no anſwer: but, on Mountney's ſay-

ing to him, " Come, I can allow you only a moment to take leave;" I approached to throw my arms round his neck, and to beg him to take care of himſelf.

He turned ſhort from me, and left me to my ſorrow, without offering to comfort me by one word, by a ſingle look.

A ſhower of tears relieved me, while Loyd, who appeared to be little leſs concerned than myſelf, perſuaded me to be immediately blooded; but I liſtened to nothing which ſhe propoſed, and ſat, endeavouring by reflection to account for all the confuſion which had happened.

I aſked Loyd again and again, if ſhe actually knew, or could gueſs, how Sir Charles got into my cloſet.

She declared her ignorance in ſuch pitying terms, and ſeemed to be ſo ſincerely affected with my diſtreſs, that I could not diſbelieve her.

Before Mountney returned, the ſurgeon had taken care, with the aſſiſtance of the ſervants, to remove Sir Charles, of whoſe life

life he declared he had very ſlight hopes, as he had received two dangerous wounds, one in the ſide, and the other near the hip, and was entirely inſenſible from loſs of blood.

I trembled at this account for my Avon's ſafety.

In that ſituation Mountney found me at his return, and told me that he had not only ſeen my lord on his way to Dover, but had prepared lady Tameworth to receive me, and adviſed me to be carried to Sir William's in my chair directly.

I complied with his admonition, as my ſpirits began to ſink.—I ſtill, however, aſſured Mountney in the ſtrongeſt terms, that I was innocent.

"I dare ſay you are," replied he; "and I hope we ſhall be able, in time, to make my lord ſenſible that you are.—As ſoon as you get to Sir William's, continued he, be put to bed and blooded, and I will ſee you again in the morning: but ſay as little as poſſible to lady Tameworth about this af-

fair,—(ſhe is an arrant goſſip)—and I will undertake to undeceive my lord."

With theſe words he put me into my chair, and walked by the ſide of it to Sir William's.—I met with the kindeſt, the tendereſt treatment; but not being able to get any ſleep, and being particularly deſirous of having you with me, I bade Loyd ſend for my writing-box; and as ſhe ſo very earneſtly perſuaded me not to leave my bed, I ſat up in it to write this, believing that the deſcription of my ſituation would be an inducement to you to come, not to be reſiſted.

LETTER

LETTER LX.

Mr. MOUNTNEY to Lord AVON.

I HAVE waited, my lord, in hopes of ſending ſome ſatisfactory intelligence to you: and it is with pleaſure that I now inform you of Sedley's life being out of danger, from *your* hand at leaſt: tho' he is wounded in ſuch a way, that he will never be the man he was before.—As ſoon as his ſenſes returned, and when he was able to ſpeak, he ſent for lord Melville and myſelf; and declared, that having, from the firſt ſight of lady Avon, admired her more than any woman he had ever ſeen, he hoped, from her youth and inexperience, and his own ſeducing powers, to make her at leaſt ſenſible of his paſſion. — "During my infamous endeavours, continued he, I fancied that Miſs Heber did not diſlike me, and conceived it poſſible, by making my ad-

addreſſes to *her*, to gain time, and to meet with opportunities to render lady Avon ſubſervient to my wiſhes. Finding, however, all my efforts ineffectual; finding myſelf at laſt refuſed by Miſs Heber, I began, I own, to grow deſperate. Lord Avon's attachment to Mrs. Minchin, juſt at that juncture, inſpiring me with new hopes, I commenced an acquaintance with her; and as it was her intereſt alſo to provide my lady with a lover, that ſhe might ſecure him to herſelf more firmly, by ſtrengthening his ſuſpicions harboured againſt his wife; ſhe fixed upon lord Melville as a very amiable man, and as a man whom ſhe imagined more likely to ſucceed in his deſigns on lady Avon; but when he met with a repulſe, I reſolved to get into the houſe, on one of thoſe nights when he ſtaid at Mrs. Minchin's. I concealed myſelf, by bribing a houſe-maid, in a cloſet near my lady's chamber; propoſing to remain ſecreted till ſhe was a-bed: to come out then, and by fine ſpeeches in praiſe of her,

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accompanied with invectives againſt his lordſhip and Mrs. Minchin, to try to move her in my favour. My intention was, in caſe of being unſucceſsful by fair means, to convince her ladyſhip how much her reputation would be aſperſed, when it was known that I had been with her in her bed-chamber.—Many women have ſacrificed their virtue to their reputation; and I flattered myſelf that lady Avon would prove one of them.—Before I had time, however, to play off the ſecond part of my ſcheme, my lord came home.—Finding I ſhould have no opportunity to purſue my intentions *that* night, I tried to ſlip away; but happening to run againſt ſomething, which fell down, he came in and diſcovered me before I could eſcape. High words immediately roſe between us: we both drew, and I, having received two large wounds, fell, and ſoon became inſenſible thro' loſs of blood.

"And now, my lord," continued he, turning to lord Melville, "it only remains for

for us to know how your lordſhip came to be found alſo in lord Avon's houſe at that time of night?"

"I hope, Sir, replied his lordſhip, that I can account for my ſudden appearance there in a very ſatisfactory manner. That I admired lady Avon I am not aſhamed to own; but I am aſhamed to confeſs, that I took advantage of a piece of ſervice I did her, to make her acquainted with my ſentiments; but yet, as the diſhonour of ſuch a proceeding falls only upon myſelf, I do not repent of it; for the repulſe her ladyſhip gave me has ſo exceedingly raiſed her in my opinion, that I look upon her as ſuperior to any woman I ever knew; and I revere her virtue as much as I admire her ſenſe and beauty.—I never repeated my viſits after her expreſs prohibition,—but I could not tear her lovely image from my heart—I could not ceaſe to adore what was ſo worthy of adoration; nor to wiſh and pray, continually, for her never-ending felicity.—With theſe ſentiments, then,

was

was it poſſible for me to hear of any deſigns againſt her honour and her peace, without wiſhing to ſave her? I was not, indeed, exactly acquainted with your intentions, Sir Charles, but I knew they were bad, from what Mrs. Minchin had dropped: and as I knew you went *from* her that day, with a deſign to go to lord Avon's, as ſoon as lord Avon was *with* her, I watched you, and ſaw you admitted, with an air of privacy, by a ſervant, at a late hour, when my lord was from home. Knowing that my lady's dreſſing-room looked upon an opening, from whence I could hear any buſtle in her apartment, I walked up and down near her window. At laſt, hearing a ſcream, and imagining that ſhe herſelf was in danger, I ran into the houſe, hurried up ſtairs and came juſt time enough to prevent her falling to the floor. My behaviour was, I confeſs, ſufficient to create ſuſpicions in my lord; I am, therefore, particularly happy in having this opportunity to clear myſelf, Sir, to you—(addreſ-

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rticularly happy in having this opportu-
y to cle[illegible]ſelf, Sir, to you—(addreſs

ſing himſelf to *me*) but ſtill more ſo in vindicating the moſt amiable and virtuous of wives, who will, I hope, by your repreſenting this affair to my lord in its true light, be reſtored to his lordſhip's higheſt opinion, and tendereſt affection."

And now, my lord, I muſt relate the ſituation and ſentiments of lady Avon. 'Till the ſervant who attended you brought word back that you were ſafely arrived at Calais, ſhe appeared to be in a very anxious ſtate of mind about you: but after that intelligence, there was a ſteady calmneſs in her appearance, which would have ſufficiently evinced her innocence, had it not been ſoon confirmed from the lips of Sir Charles and lord Melville. You may thank Heaven, my lord, that your Eudocia has ſo excellent a conſtitution, and ſuch a flow of ſpirits, which have enabled her to ſupport herſelf under trials, by which many, by which, indeed, moſt women would have been overwhelmed. Your behaviour to her before you went, and your neglecting to

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ſend a line back by the ſervant, have, I believe, touched her deeply :—She is, 'tis true, in much better health than could be expected, all things conſidered; but I cannot tell how you will bring her to a reconciliation with you, as ſhe told me, no longer ago than yeſterday, that a woman was never ſafe with a man ſo ſubject to jealouſy.

As ſoon as ſhe heard that Sir Charles was out of danger, ſhe returned to Groſvenor-ſquare with Olivia, who immediately came from Richmond, and remained with her at Sir William's till her removal.—That poor dear girl could not help letting fall a few tears when ſhe firſt heard of Sir Charles's dangerous ſituation: and when lady Avon cried, "Fye, Olivia, Can you be ſorry for a wretch ſo unworthy of living?" anſwered, in the moſt amiable manner, "I do not weep for the man, my dear lady Avon, but for his vices."—

Olivia has, certainly, an excellent heart. I do not yet quite deſpair of making ſome

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impreſſion upon it. She receives all my attentions to amuſe and divert her, not only with politeneſs, but with a complacency which is extremely pleaſing: nay, ſhe does not ſcruple to praiſe me for my ſolicitude about her dear lady Avon's intereſt.

The late diſagreeable event ſeems to have ſtrengthened the friendſhip which has ſo long ſubſiſted between theſe amiable women, who ſpend their time together, chiefly with their books and their muſick—They admit but few viſitors, except your and lady Avon's relations, and myſelf.

I have not yet ventured to aſk Olivia's permiſſion to write to Mr. Heber. The fear of a refuſal keeps me ſilent. Beſides, I am willing to ſee you once more reconciled to my lady firſt, if a friendly interview can be brought about. She has, undoubtedly, a noble ſoul—Never has ſhe dropped a ſyllable relating to your affair with Mrs. Minchin, who has neither ſent [illegible] called. It is ſaid that ſhe is gone in-

to

to the country. She will act wisely, indeed, not to make her appearance again, as she cannot but appear to the greatest disadvantage; not to say, in the most infamous light.

If any thing should retard your setting out for England, I shall, I suppose, have an answer to this:—but I shall be more pleased to see yourself than a letter from you.

LETTER

LETTER LXI.

Lord AVON to Mr. MOUNTNEY.

NEVER, ſurely, was any man more wretched than I am.—You expect me, I know, to rejoice with you upon Sedley's being out of danger; more eſpecially on my wife's being ſafe and well, as my mind has been racked on her account, becauſe every thing was to be apprehended from ſuch an alarm in her ſituation: all-gracious Heaven be praiſed that ſhe has received no fatal ſhock in ſo critical a condition.—That is the only ſatisfaction I am capable of taſting.—I know, upon reflection, that ſhe is certainly innocent.—I am pleaſed to find that I have not been acceſſary to the death of a man who, I am now aſſured, thanks to my excellent Eudocia, could not injure me; but I feel the greateſt relief, weighed down as I am with ſhame and re-

morſe for having ſo unjuſtly accuſed, and ſo inhumanly treated her, from the information which you give me concerning her health and the ſtate of her mind. Had ſhe fallen a victim, as I at firſt feared ſhe would, from her ſurprize and terror, to my precipitate carriage, I ſhould not have ſurvived her: and even as things are now circumſtanced, while ſhe is thus, with reaſon, incenſed againſt me, and fearful of truſting herſelf with me, I will remain at a diſtance; tho' I would, at this inſtant, give my eyes for *one* look at her, and my life to ſnatch *one* dear embrace. Till ſhe can, therefore, bring herſelf to look upon me in the light ſhe firſt beheld me, (perhaps you and ſhe both think, and perhaps juſtly too, that in the ſame light I deſerve not to be viewed) I will never return. I cannot bear the thoughts of a cool reception from the woman on whom my ſoul doats,—my life, my all, my more-than-ever-beloved Eudocia.

Shew

Shew this letter to her—'tis not, indeed, fit for her to ſee; but I cannot write a better one:—My mind is quite unhinged.—I began to write two or three letters to her, but they would not do. My expreſſions did not come up to my ideas of her excellence. She is all virtue. How could I, my ſweet, my innocent, my angelic creature, harbour an evil thought of one ſo perfectly pure, ſo exemplarily good!—Shew this to her, I ſay, Mountney; but do not let her believe—as ſhe did once—that I am mad.

Juſt when I was going to diſpatch this, I was informed, that a lady, arrived from England, deſired to ſpeak with me.

H—ns!—how my heart fluttered!—I imagined—no—I could not expect ſuch a favour—yet I *did* expect to ſee my Eudocia—I knew ſhe was kind; I knew ſhe was forgiving. I fancied, at firſt, that her humanity might have induced her to viſit an unfortunate wretch, baniſhed from her preſence and her heart.

Who

Who ſhould come in but Mrs. Minchin? Curſe on the name, and her that bears it, the ſource of all my ſorrows!—Yet I ſhould rather curſe myſelf for beginning to give her hopes of ſucceeding with me.—Had I not been prompted by a moſt abſurd deſire to make my wife jealous, this my plague and I had never met.

I turned my back, and clapped my hand up haſtily to my eyes that I might not ſee her; but ſhe hung upon me in ſuch a manner, that I was obliged to make a violent effort to diſengage myſelf—In ſo doing I ſaw her crawling after me on the ground.

With her eyes bathed in tears, ſhe ſaid eagerly, "Oh! forgive me: I dare not aſk for your love: you cannot, I fear, either love or pity me, tho' there never was a human creature who wanted your compaſſion more.—'Tis godlike, however, to be merciful—Even thoſe who have ſinned againſt Heaven itſelf, are not entirely excluded from the throne of grace."

I could not bear to hear ſuch a wretch talk in this ſtrain: I broke rudely from her.

She fell on the floor with a ſhriek; at my inhumanity, I ſuppoſe.—But have I not been inhuman to my wife, to my angel? and can ſhe, this Harriot, preſume to murmur?"

I left her, therefore, and ran out of the houſe—The officious miſtreſs of the *hotel* followed me, begging me to return, as the lady was in ſtrong fits; adding, that ſhe could not anſwer for her life, if I would not come back, and aſſiſt her.

I made no anſwer; but quickened my pace till I got out of her ſight; took other lodgings, and ſent my man, who had followed me, for my things, bidding him tell Mrs. Minchin, if ſhe made any enquiries after me, that I had ordered him to ſay that I would never ſee her again.

He returned in about an hour, and told me that ſhe had been put to bed, extremely ill,

ill, after having declared that ſhe ſhould not live if I could not be prevailed on to come and ſee her.

I peremptorily refuſed to go to her; nor could they perſuade me, by repeated meſſages, to alter my reſolution; tho' they informed me that ſhe was in a violent fever, and threatened to deſtroy herſelf if I denied her requeſt.

You may imagine, that tho' I deſpiſed Mrs. Minchin, I could not be unaffected with this account of her ſituation—(Yet—my G—d! why ſhould I, ſo deſpicable a mortal, who am fallen ſo very low, why ſhould I, of all people, deſpiſe any perſon, eſpecially a poor weak woman, whoſe faults and follies ſprung chiefly from her too great partiality to me!)—But when I reflected on the miſchief ſhe had levelled againſt my dear wife, my heart hardened again—I kept my reſolution, and ſent to ſecure my paſſage on board the firſt packet which ſailed for England.

When I arrive—(and happy ſhall I be if I ever arrive) in England, I ſhall not dare, however, to ruſh, undeſired, into the preſence of my wife—I was going, miſtaken, fond fool as I am, I was going, I ſay, to call her my Eudocia—but that's too much —ſhe will moſt probably never be mine— I cannot ſee her till ſhe chuſes I ſhould appear before her;—and if ſhe never chuſes to ſee me, I muſt ſubmit.—My head is exceedingly out of order. I was going to call Bingley, who is juſt come to me, and who runs out into the moſt extravagant encomiums on his angel of a lady, as he calls her—(poor fellow, he has lived with me from his infancy; he knows that he cannot pleaſe me more effectually, than by reſpecting my wife)—I was going, I ſay, to bid him tell the maſter of the veſſel that I had changed my mind.—Yet do not you, nor let my wife, miſtake me, Mountney, and ſuppoſe that I ſtaid on Harriot's account.—Nothing ſhould have bribed me to ſee her;

but

but I felt myſelf all over ill—Yet I may be ſick or well—no matter what becomes of me.

If I land ſafe, I ſhall go to Richmond: I ſhall not be able to meet Eudocia till ſhe thinks ſhe can forgive me—and if ſhe abſolutely ſteels her heart againſt me, I will come hither again, or convey myſelf to ſome other country.—I will not go, however, on any account, to Mrs. Minchin, who is given over. If ſhe dies, may Heaven forgive her as I do, tho' ſhe has totally deſtroyed my peace.

LETTER LXII.

Mr. MOUNTNEY to Lord AVON.

THIS waits your landing at Dover: You may come to Richmond; my lady and Miſs Heber are in town: they only ſpend a day at Richmond, now and then, for the benefit of the air, which has proved very ſerviceable to Olivia.

Sir William, lady Tamworth, or general Brett, have hitherto been of our parties, neither of whom hinders me from being attentive to Olivia; who owned, yeſterday, in the garden, while I obliged her to lean on my arm, as ſhe was extremely weak and low, that ſhe had a very high eſteem for me:—"But in whom, Mr. Mountney, continued ſhe, bluſhing, can I, after what I have ſeen and heard, place any confidence?"

"In

"In *me* you may ſafely confide, my dear Miſs Heber, ſaid I; but try me firſt, only ſuffer me to love you, and to ſhew that I do, and will conſent to your not returning it till your own inclination prompts you to make me ſo happy, or till you think I deſerve ſuch happineſs."

She returned no verbal anſwer: a roſy bluſh was her reply; nor did ſhe make any oppoſition to a tender kiſs which I imprinted on her pretty white hand, which I held in mine during our walk.

I have diſcovered, by my viſits to Sedley ſince his confinement, that he has punctually correſponded with Ackworth all along; and wrote to *him*, who is at Bath, to accuſe him of having concealed Sedley's deſigns againſt you, at the ſame time that he profeſſed a great eſteem for you, and a ſtrong deſire to hear of your happineſs.

In anſwer to that charge, he aſſures me, that having been long acquainted with Sedley's volatile temper, he never imagined he had any ſerious intentions of any kind;

and that had he really believed them to have been of ſo pernicious a nature, he ſhould not only have reproved him, (as he had often taken him to taſk for ſome of his rogueries, which were likely to be attended with diſagreeable conſequences) but have acquainted *me* alſo with his deſigns.

Of this apology for his conduct I am to believe as much as I think proper; yet I don't imagine that George has ever been in the leaſt acceſſary to the follies of his friend: he has only remained neuter, and ſuffered him to play the devil unmoleſted. Ackworth is, according to the language of the world, an eaſy good natured man; but certainly good nature may be carried ſo far as to degenerate into downright inſenſibility.—Not to ſtop a madman in the purſuit of his deſtructive frolicks, is ſurely to be deſtitute of feeling or ſpirit.—However, I have made Ackworth ſenſible of his error, and deſire once more to bring [redacted] together upon a friendly footing. I

ſhall,

ſhall, therefore, let him know when you are in a ſtate tranquil enough to receive his renewed overtures.

Sedley, whom I ſee now and then, talks of going to the waters of Bareges as ſoon as he is able to travel; and Melville vows never more to come into lady Avon's company, not even within ſight of her, if he can poſſibly avoid her. Having, therefore, no formidable rivals to fear, you may come and peaceably recover the poſſeſſion of your Eudocia's heart: that is, if ſhe can bring herſelf to receive you again; and much may be hoped from the excellence of her diſpoſition.

I ſhall call on you, when you are arrived at Richmond, but ſhall not remain with you there till you are in a more ſettled ſituation.—Write to me, then, as uſual: as I ſhall to you from London.

LETTER LXIII.

Miſs OLIVIA HEBER to Miſs HEBER.

AFTER having received ſo many letters,* filled with diſagreeable accounts from me, my dear Alicia, you will, now, I dare ſay, be glad to hear that lord Avon is at Richmond.—Mr. Mountney has been with him a day and a night. He has told my lady, that he hardly knew him at firſt, ſo pale, ſo emaciated, ſo worn—as he expreſſed it—with pining diſcontent. Not that he has had any illneſs; but a diſeaſed mind is ſufficient to produce in any perſon the alteration like that viſible in his lordſhip.

Our dear Doſſy wept while Mr. Mountney deſcribed my lord's diſtreſsful appearance—Compaſſion moved; love melted her.

* Theſe letters are omitted, as unneceſſary.

"I will

"I will go to him, Mr. Mountney," ſaid ſhe: I *muſt* ſee him."

"Have patience, replied he; let me"—

"I can have no patience, interrupted ſhe, while my dear Harry is ſo wretched."

"But you *muſt* ſtay and hear what I have to ſay, anſwered he.—Mrs. Minchin is dead. While my lord waited at Dover for the horſes being put to the chaiſe, a boat arrived with one of her ſervants on board, who was diſpatched to inform her family of her death. I aſked my lord after the particulars, but he ſaid he did not make any enquiries about them. "Let her for ever, cried he, with her follies, be buried in oblivion: I have enough to do to correct my own: I can only talk of my wronged Eudocia, whom I ſo eagerly wiſh to ſee, but whom I ſo much dread to behold."

Our dear lady Avon would have ſet out immediately, but Mr. Mountney deſired her to ſtay till the following day; telling her, that it was too late for only two or three women to go by themſelves; and as

he was engaged in town, he could not poſſibly attend her: tho', as he ſtaid with us during the remainder of the evening, I imagined he had a particular reaſon for his behaviour.

She roſe up to retire after ſupper, and I was going to follow her—He caught me by the hand, and begged me to ſtay half an hour longer.

I complied, thro' inclination indeed, and becauſe I never know how to refuſe him any reaſonable requeſt, as he is always ſo obliging to me. But I was now quite ſtaggered how to anſwer him, when he very ſeriouſly intreated me to give him leave to write to my father. I am ſure I looked exceedingly ſilly; nor could I make him any kind of reply for a conſiderable time.

On his eagerly importuning me to ſpeak, and imagining that lady Avon would be ſurpriſed at my ſtaying ſo long below after her, I told him, at laſt, that my ſentiments with regard to him were not changed; that I had an eſteem for him on account of his own

own merit, and for his unalterable friendſhip for lady Avon; but that I had never thought of him in any other light.

"And is it then impoſſible, ſaid he, for that dear innocent heart to feel nothing but eſteem! Only tell me, Miſs Heber, if you have any violent objection to my aſking your father's conſent to make you mine by the ſtricteſt ties of love and honour. Time, perhaps, and my unchanging affection, may produce ſimilar ſenſations on your ſide."

I really was quite ſorry to find him ſo urgent: I had rather not think of marriage yet a while.

At laſt I told him ſo—He ſeemed diſappointed, and left me; ſaying, however, before he went, that he thought my lady appeared too much affected to go to Richmond ſo late in the evening: but added, that he ſhould not oppoſe her going in the morning.

When I went up to my lady, I acquainted her with what had paſſed; and ſhe chid me for not giving Mountney a more favourable

vourable anſwer: telling me, that I might live to be a hundred, and never meet with a man ſo worthy, and ſo ſuitable to me.—"Therefore, continued ſhe, as you don't, certainly, deſign always to live ſingle, why will you refuſe to make him happy?"

At firſt I was a little capricious, I am afraid; but upon her talking to me more earneſtly, I promiſed to follow her advice if ever Mountney renewed the ſubject.

"'Tis very poſſible, ſaid ſhe, in her lively way, that you have heard and ſeen him for the laſt time. Men of ſenſe, my dear, don't like to be trifled with."

"But as I have not intended to trifle with him, ſaid I, he cannot be angry for nothing. Beſides, he *muſt* come to ſee you and my lord, and I am not going to leave you."

"Poor dear child, replied ſhe, laughing, ſhe is quite afraid of loſing her love—But come, Olly, added ſhe, let us undreſs, and I will ſee what I can do for you in the morning." Then, after having begged her not

not to take notice to Mr. Mountney about what I had ſaid, I turned the converſation to a ſubject more intereſting to her.

[Thus far I wrote before Mr. Mountney came to breakfaſt.]

As I was dreſſed firſt, I came down to him.—He received me with his uſual politeneſs, but looked extremely ſerious.

Doſſy, ſoon afterwards, came flying into the room with a giddy air,—nothing can tame her—and ſaid, "This poor thing, Mr. Mountney, has been fretting all night, becauſe ſhe has taken it into her head that your angry with her.

"Dear lady Avon!"—ſaid I, laying my hand upon her mouth,——"I really do not comprehend your ladyſhip's meaning," replied he, very gravely, "I have no right to be offended with Miſs Olivia."

"How ſtupid men are at particular times, ſaid ſhe, What can I mean by that?"—

"Oh! hold—ſtop—dear, dear Eudocia," cried I——

Mountney now began to have ſome ſuſpicions; for, with a half ſmile, he caught me from my friend, and looking kindly in my face, ſaid, "And what is all this buſtle about? Have I any ſhare in it, Miſs Heber?"

I coloured, and trembled to ſuch a degree, Alicia, that I thought I never ſhould have recovered myſelf.

The ſprightly lady Avon then cried, "There—take her—take her, Mr. Mountney, I am ſure if ſhe does not love you juſt now, ſhe will bye and bye."

Imagine whether this at all tended to bring me to myſelf—However, there is no being angry with her; and her ſpirits are ſo raiſed by my lord's return—

Mr. Mountney ſaid a great many handſome things to us both—and very much lamented his being unable to attend us to Richmond.

The coach is now at the door. Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER LXIV.

Lord AVON to Mr. MOUNTNEY.

WHAT tranſporting happineſs am I now, my dear Mountney, going to enjoy, if I have but diſcretion enough to make the remembrance of my paſt follies deter me from plunging into new ones!

When you left me yeſterday, I was in ſuch a fit of deſpair, that I began to think I had not the ſlighteſt expectation of a more tranquil ſtate; knowing to how great a degree I had offended my excellent wife, and very rationally believing that ſhe might never be able, if inclined, to conquer ſo juſt a reſentment—yet ſighing, trembling, wiſhing for a reconciliation.—What a condition!—Was not this ſufficient to diſquiet a mind much more at eaſe than mine has been for a long time.

You

You gave me ſome diſtant hopes of my Eudocia's pardon; but I did not, I own, dare to flatter myſelf with having a ſight of her ſo ſoon.

While I was in this deſponding ſituation, Bingley hurried after me into the garden, and told me that my lady was come.

I declare poſitively, I hardly credited his intelligence; believing that the poor, faithful fellow had only ſpoke according to his wiſhes, and was not the actual meſſenger of ſuch animating news.

I therefore followed him very ſlowly, ſtill demanding what he meant.

Rubbing his hands for joy, he cried, "Indeed, my lord, 'tis true—my lady is come—ſhe is here," continued he, reſpectfully paſſing my angel, whom I indeed beheld.

H—ns! how my ſwelling boſom throbbed with rapture at the ſight of her! With what an elegant dignity ſhe advanced! What a ſpirited glow was ſpread over her lovely

lovely face! How her charming eyes, while they ſparkled like fire, beamed tenderneſs inexpreſſible! I felt my heart ſink within me—I ſhook with a thouſand apprehenſions—yet, tho' I trembled to meet her, I died to be locked in her arms.—Then, conſidering how undeſerving I was, how little I merited ſuch a bleſſing, I turned away from her in abſolute deſpair. Recollecting, at length, that I ſtill ought to implore her pardon, however hopeleſs of obtaining it, I went immediately to throw myſelf at her feet.

She prevented me by running into my arms.

Imagine my ſenſations — I could not ſpeak—I could only ſtrain her to my beating boſom, while I wept aloud upon her neck.

For a conſiderable time we remained in this ſituation—mute from the violence of our emotions.

My Eudocia, recovering firſt, begged me, with a tender pity which made her appear

pear more than human in my eyes, to be calm—to be compoſed. "Let all be now forgotten, my lord," ſaid ſhe, "that has given us a moment's uneaſineſs; and let us, from this hour, endeavour to make each other perfectly happy—You are reſtored to my arms; to my heart: you are dearer to me than ever; and I will from this day forward be the ſort of wife you pleaſe to have me."

"And can I hear this and be compoſed, my life, my all that's good and dear to me?" cried I, embracing her with the moſt impaſſioned tenderneſs.—"Can it be poſſible not to adore ſuch angelic ſweetneſs?—Oh! Eudocia! how little have I deſerved this amiable condeſcenſion!"

The lovely creature returned my endearments with an affectionate ardor which I had never been bleſt with before; and, at the ſame time, kindly inſiſted on my never thinking again on what was paſt—while I gave myſelf up to tranſports till then unknown. Yet I could not ſhake off a dejection

jection which hung upon my mind, on reflecting upon my paſt follies.—My Eudocia obſerving it, propoſed to me to go into the houſe, and to ſee Olivia, who has, ſhe tells me, conſented to make you happy—with ſuch wives, my friend, we cannot be otherwiſe—yet *your* felicity will be more pure than mine, becauſe it will be unembittered by remorſe.

My ſelf-reproaches prevented me from eating at dinner.—Had I not been ſo prevented, the raptures I felt on ſeeing and hearing her, who is my ſoul's ſupreme joy, would have almoſt deprived me of my ſenſes.—With what tender care did ſhe endeavour to help me to whatever ſhe knew I uſed to be fond of; and how many agreeable ſchemes did ſhe form for little rural excurſions, for the recovery of my health, and the amuſement of my mind!

"You are ſo pale and thin, my Harry," ſaid the dear creature, "that I muſt have ſomething done for you: tho' I love you the better for looking ſo juſt now, becauſe

I know

I know I have been the cauſe of your anxiety—but it has worn you too much."

I declared to her, that ſhe was a thouſand times more beautiful than ever.

"Don't you, then, reproach yourſelf while you ſay ſo?" replied ſhe, with a tender ſmile—"But I have, indeed, felt for you greatly: only my exceſſive ſpirits ſupported me under things that would have hurt ſome people prodigiouſly."

"Your innocence, my love," ſaid I, "was a never-failing ſupport: you have always been bleſt with a conſciouſneſs of riſing ſuperior to every injurious ſuſpicion, while *my* guilt ever ſunk me deeper and deeper."

"No more of that," cried ſhe, putting her hand upon my lips, "if you love me," while I almoſt devoured her charming fingers.

We ſpent the day in the moſt delightful endearments; and I could hardly tear myſelf from her to write to you.

She

She has juſt now propoſed to me to go down to my houſe in Devonſhire for the ſummer: but I cannot think of *that* journey at preſent.—She bids me tell you that Olivia wants you to come and trifle with her, as ſhe ſits moaping in a corner by herſelf. — The gentle Olivia, bluſhing, cries. "Fye, my dear lady Avon."—Yet I will venture to ſay, that ſhe will not be ſorry to ſee you.—My dear girl, who is now leaning over my ſhoulder, tells her what I have written, and ſhe threatens me with her pretty eyes: my lively angel, at the ſame time, ſays that ſhe will not have me chidden till I have better health and ſpirits to ſupport ſuch an attack.

Come then, my dear Mountney, and increaſe the happineſs of your happy

AVON.

P. S. I HAVE conſidered that, were it not for my Eudocia's ſituation, which makes me chuſe to have her in or very near London, it may be alſo injurious to

her

her character to carry her into Devonſhire juſt at this time, as the tattling world have made themſelves ſo buſy about our affairs. — No —let us, on the contrary, appear every where in public together; and by our lives contradict the moſt inſidious calumnies, and conſequently ſilence them.—I am now perfectly convinced, that a woman of ſenſe and virtue may be truſted even in the worſt company; and that I alone have been to blame, with regard to lady Avon, from the beginning, from the firſt ſetting out in the marriage-ſtate. After I had, as ſhe once juſtly reproached me, taken her from her friends, I had no right to find fault with her innocent gaiety, while ſhe gave me no reaſon to doubt her honour.—But I hope and believe 'tis all over now for ever: of this I am certain, ſhe never diſcovered ſo much enchanting tenderneſs as ſhe did laſt night.—I have only to wiſh, that her tenderneſs may be as laſting as it is certainly, to all appearance, ſincere.

FINIS.